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Getting Over Getting Old

"The next couple of decades will witness – it will be public policy problem number one – the aging of one of the largest birth cohorts this country has ever produced... I shudder at the thought of my generation reaching old age, not because there may be little in the till to bail us out, but because we have not done well with good fortune and we are likely to do worse with bad..."

A Boomer Reflection By Alan Wolfe

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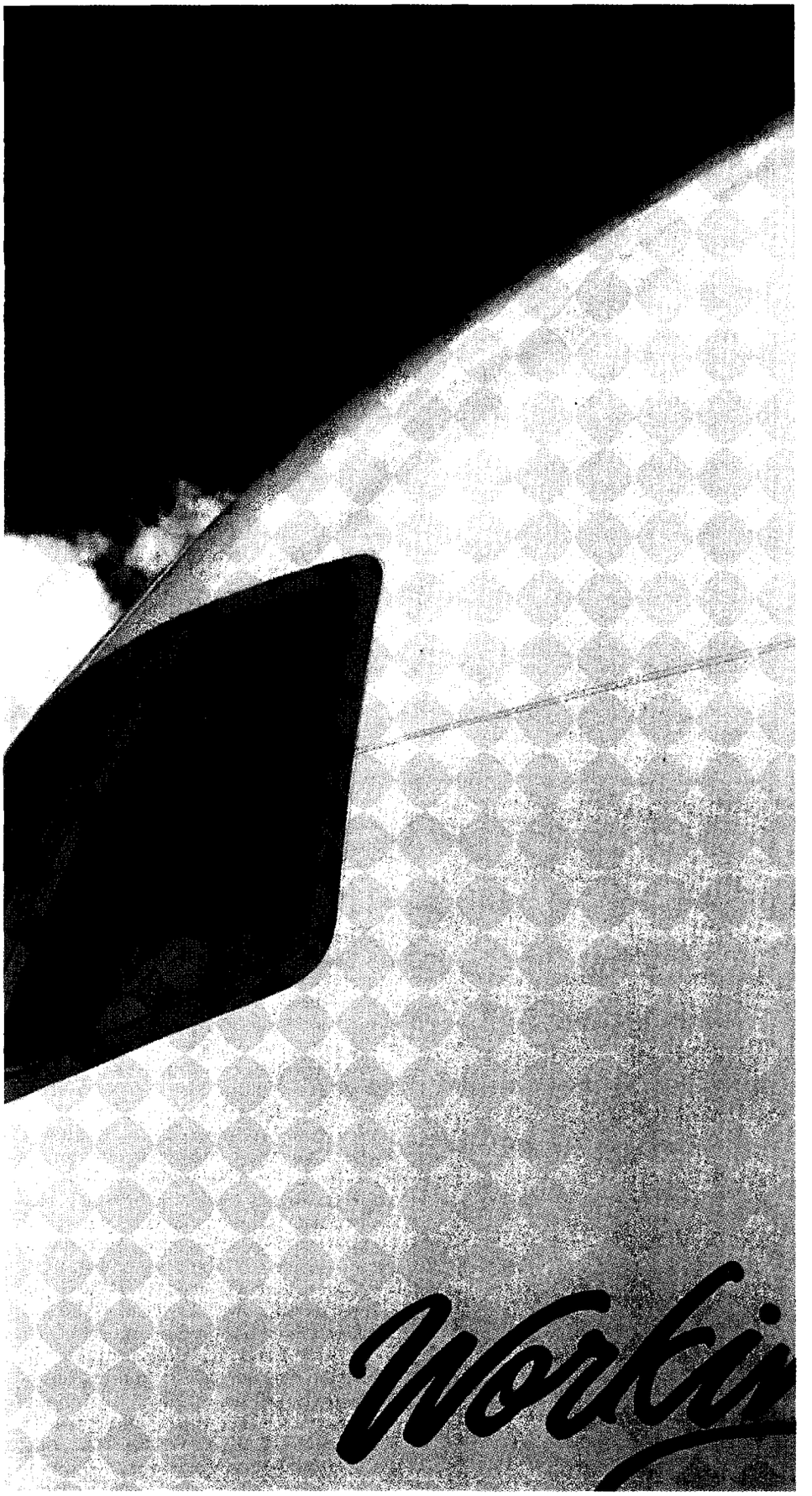

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BOEING

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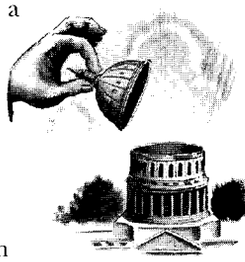
FROM WASHINGTON

Microturfs

This is a trick question. Three days before Quebec's sovereignty referendum, when anti-sovereigntists rallied in Montreal, how large was the turnout, as reported by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation? Answer: depends on what you mean by "Canadian Broadcasting Corporation." According to Newsworld, the CBC's English-language all-news channel, the turnout was 150,000. According to RDI, the CBC's French-language all-news channel, the turnout was 35,000. Of all the reasons to believe that sovereignty for Quebec is still in the cards, the biggest may be the force this anecdote crystallizes: the balkanizing tendency of some modern communications technologies.

Quebec's nationalism was galvanized in 1952 by the advent of French-language TV. Indigenous programming brought a sense of collective identity to a people whose video entertainment had previously come from Hollywood. Since then, the number of Francophone TV outlets has only grown. The last twenty years have brought the above-mentioned RDI; the public-affairs TV network Radio Quebec, run by the provincial government and carrying a strong nationalist flavor; and lots of French-language cable channels, including MusiquePlus, the rock video station whose hip public affairs show, "Politiquement Direct," was used adroitly by sovereigntist leader Lucien Bouchard. (Bouchard reviewed clips from MuchMusic, Canada's English-language rock video station, showing Toronto residents saying "I'm sick of Quebec walking all over us.... You want out, get out." He then noted that this attitude is "not very respectful.")



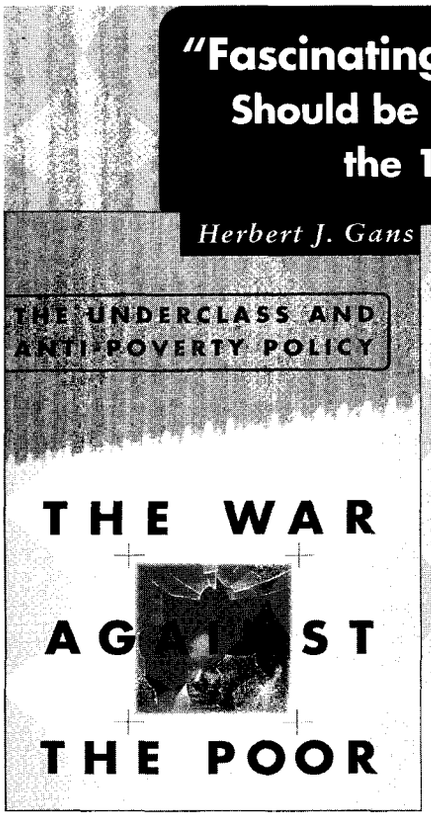
Canada's French-language channels aren't nearly as insular as the subterranean networks that help sustain, say, the American militia movement—the mail-order videotapes about the Waco siege, the newsletters and e-mails about black helicopters. Still, in both cases there is the tendency of information networks catering to distinct communities to reinforce pre-existing beliefs. And in both cases there is the same deep economic logic. The ever-dropping cost of sending data—print, video, audio—means that distinct communities, however small, have more and more data conduits devoted to them, and thus find it easier and easier to ignore outside sources.

But what about all those transborder technologies, like direct-broadcast satellite and the Internet? Aren't they homogenizing culture globally, breaking down barriers left and right? Not as much as advertised. Canadian cable TV companies have demonized the coming direct-broadcast satellites as cultural "deathstars," and they may indeed bring lots of Hollywood junk; but they're unlikely to corrupt Quebec's linguistic purity. They'll offer packages of French-language channels and packages of English-language channels, and few families will buy both. And the more French channels there are, the less time French-speaking children in Montreal will spend watching American broadcasts that seep across the border—traditionally one way Montreal's young Francophones have become bilingual.

As for the Internet: though "global," it is the ultimate in balkanizing technologies. It reduces the cost of reaching a group, whatever the size and geographic distribution, to near zero. During Quebec's sovereignty debate, the Internet's role was mainly to host: *(a)* the "*oui*" worldwide-web site, where sovereigntists went to have their beliefs reinforced; and *(b)* the "no" worldwide-web site, where federalists went to have their beliefs reinforced. Yes, there was interchange on the discussion group "soc.culture.quebec," but it often had the polarizing tendency for which Net discourse is noted; lacking the visual cues that keep face-to-face conversation civil, people tend to fly off the handle.

The distinction between TV and the Internet will slowly disappear. As the Net consists more of capacious optical fibers, and less of archaic copper wires, it will become a major video conduit. Someday there will be an effectively infinite number of TV networks, all with rock-bottom distribution costs. Narrowcasting will grow radically narrower. (Presumably there will be at least one Cree Indian network, and maybe the Cree in Quebec will use it to render more plausi-

continued on page 49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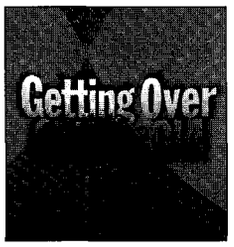

Cover by Eric Baker
for THE NEW REPUBLIC.
Article on page 33.

4 **ROBERT WRIGHT** TRB: MICROTURFS Is technology wrecking Canada?

6 **CORRESPONDENCE** Did gay Republicans break the law, unreasonable juries &c.

9 **THE EDITORS** RUN, COLIN, RUN! Why Powell's candidacy would be good for us.

10 **NOTEBOOK** Clinton v. Israel, crack v. cocaine, Clinton v. himself &c.

12 **STANLEY CROUCH** AFTER YOU'VE GONE: CHERRY ON TOP A jazz legend dies.

14 **LAURA JACOBS** BEENE THERE Why designer Geoffrey Beene is still peerless.

16 **CHARLES LANE** NATIONAL INSECURITY: THE MEMO A U.N. Srebrenica blood trail.

20 **MATTHEW COOPER** WHITE HOUSE WATCH: DICKS Morris and Holbrooke get nasty.

21 **ALISSA RUBIN** POWER ANGELS Reading between the lines of Christian fiction.

24 **ILAN STAVANS** DREAMING OF YOU The murdered singer Selena becomes a cult.

25 **PAUL ROBERTS** ON THE HILL: A GREEN COUP? A surprising GOP surrender.

27 **JACOB HEILBRUNN** THE NEXT COLD WAR Washington is divided over whether to contain China or appease it. But there's a saner alternative: balancing.

28 **CHONG-PIN LIN** RED ARMY Yes, there still is one. How real is Chinese power?

32 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ON FILMS: FRENCH SAINT, FRENCH MORTALS *Les Misérables* is a rich and enjoyable mess.

33 **ALAN WOLFE** THE AGE OF ANXIETY A new school claims that aging is just another season. Get over it. How to think, and not to think, about growing old.

40 **MICHAEL LEWIS** HE LOST IT AT THE MOVIES *A Good Life* by Ben Bradlee

42 **EDMUND WHITE** VERY PALE FIRE *The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov* edited by Dmitri Nabokov

45 **CHRISTINE STANSELL** CITY LIGHTS *John Sloan* by John Loughery

48 **JOHN HOLLANDER** POEM *Oggi*

50 **ANDREW SULLIVAN** LONDON DIARIST: DO I HAVE TO?

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CORRESPONDENCE

One last O.J.

To the editors:
While I found your Simpson-verdict editorial "Unreasonable Doubt" (October 23) to be thought-provoking, and (based on the evidence I am aware of) would likely have voted with you to convict, I do feel obligated to object, on behalf of the American justice system, to one of your formulations.

You write that the Simpson verdict "hinged on a simple notion: Do small lies and inconsistencies on the part of the police automatically discredit all evidence and prove a black defendant's innocence beyond a reasonable doubt?"

Surely you have that backwards. Last time I checked, the laws (their imperfect incarnation in public practice notwithstanding) presumed innocence, and "reasonable doubt" about a defendant's guilt set him free. It's the prosecution that has the burden of eliminating doubt in order to secure the verdict it wants, and not the other way around.

RICHARD MINTZ
Arlington, Virginia

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TIMES BOOKS

To the editors:
Michael Lind makes many good points about the jury system ("Jury Dismissed," October 23), but if he thinks that the adoption of a continental European-style legal system would have prevented the O.J. Simpson trial from "degenerating into an appalling spectacle," he should read some French newspapers. France's recently concluded "*affaire* Grégory," resulting from the 1984 murder of a 4-year-old boy and the slaying of the prime suspect by the victim's father, was nearly as appalling as the Simpson case and lasted much longer. Among the highlights: one investigating magistrate who became a darling of the TV talk shows after sensationally trying to inculpate the victim's mother, and a second who serialized his story in a "true crime" magazine while still on the case. The *affaire*'s various trials, while not broadcast live, nonetheless turned into media circuses and led to numerous Lind-style calls for the reform of a malfunctioning criminal justice system. Nor can such spectacles be blamed on nefarious American influences. Over 200 years ago, one observer wrote of a spate of Parisian trials: "The courts are becoming an arena where lawyers act more like Gladiators ... and make the success of their cases depend on the passion and rage with which they fight them." Johnnie Cochran would have been right at home.

DAVID A. BELL
New Haven, Connecticut

To the editors:
It's sad that, in the wake of the Simpson trial, even liberal pundits like Michael Lind are telling us that we need to junk the jury system. Never mind that the system works much better on the whole than inquisitorial systems of justice and has proven its superiority over the centuries in protecting individual rights; apparently it doesn't provide perfect justice, so we'd better scrap it.

Have we forgotten that two of the jurors who voted for acquittal were white? One of them had served on a previous jury where she began deliberations as a minority of one, stuck to her guns and eventually brought the other eleven around to her point of view. To hypothesize, as some have done, that the whites "must have" gone along with the black majority out of fear is gross racism.

After dismissing evidence that was almost certainly planted (probably to "guarantee" the conviction of an otherwise legitimate suspect), I couldn't create a plausible scenario for the fatal evening that fit both the facts at hand and our reasonable expectations about how a not-unintelligent guilty party would have behaved. This, to me, constitutes reasonable doubt, even though I believe O.J.

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probably did it.

So let's place the blame for this debacle where it now belongs: on police and prosecutors who rushed to judgment under the pressures of publicity and careerism rather than taking the time and care to get it right.

DAVID G. BECKER
Hanover, New Hampshire

To the editors:

I was surprised to see Michael Lind suggesting that America would be better served had it adopted a legal system like the Prussian Civil Code rather than the British common law.

The code was extraordinarily long, containing more than 16,000 provisions compared with less than 2,500 in the Napoleonic Code, and, unlike its French counterpart, the language in the Prussian Code was highly specific, attempting to state with mathematical precision what citizens could and could not do. The code reflected the drafters' certainty that they had discovered the immutable rules of morality as well as their conscious rejection of any lesson that could be drawn from the workings of actual legal systems. Besides its illiberal obsession with controlling the citizens' every move and its preference for theory over experience, the code also covered much that Americans would consider beyond the scope of the law. It prescribed in great detail, for instance, the circumstances that justified a wife's refusal of her husband's advances.

RICHARD E. MESSICK
Washington, D.C.

Orientalism

To the editors:

In his article "Disoriented" Jeffrey Rosen fails to explain the concept of impairment of the right to political participation. The basic idea is this: if state action makes it harder for a particular group to enact laws favorable to its interests, then it impairs that group's right to participation.

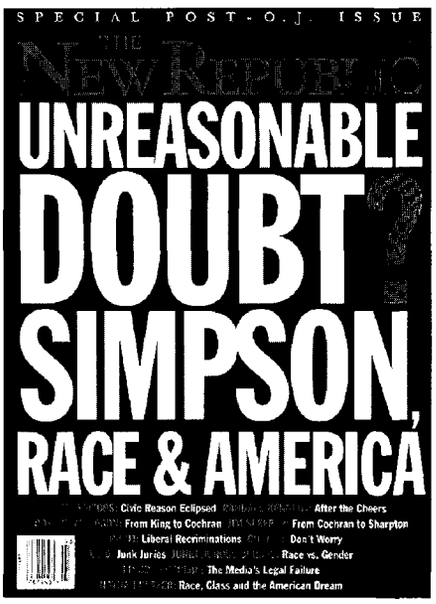
The result of Colorado's Amendment 2 is that most groups—Latinos, say, or women—need only go through ordinary channels to get laws passed favorable to their interests. Homosexuals, in contrast, must at the very least go through the extraordinary process of gaining an amendment to the state constitution merely to pass the most trivial laws to their benefit. The voters of the state as a whole must now approve before even the simplest pro-homosexual local ordinance can be passed. Such ordinances favoring other groups continue to require for passage only the previously established local process and approval. It is by enacting this additional burden that Amendment 2, no matter how its language is interpreted, violates the constitutional guarantee of equal protection of the laws.

DIANE KNOX
New Orleans, Louisiana

Puffed up

To the editors:

Hanna Rosin's puff piece on Berkeley's affirmative action program ("Race Matters," October 23) left out some very important details. The Diversity Project: Final Report, conducted by Berkeley's own Institute For The Study Of Social Change, in 1991 described the effects of what Rosin calls "a rare model of racial compromise."



According to this intensive study, the median parental income for black students at Berkeley was above the national average for whites. Also, 14 percent of black and 17 percent of Chicano students had a parental household income of over $75,000—not exactly "disadvantaged." What's more, many of the minority students at Berkeley came from mostly white or integrated suburban schools and, by their own admission, have not faced discrimination.

In addition, there is no question that Berkeley consistently holds Hispanics and blacks to a lower standard than whites or Asians for admission. Minority students had an average high-school GPA of 3.4 compared to 4.0 for whites and Asians. According to a 1992 study by the Consortium on Financing Higher Education, blacks admitted to Berkeley also had SAT scores 288 points lower than whites and Asians. Holding minorities to a lower standard does them no favors. According to a 1994 story in *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, the six-year graduation rate for blacks at Berkeley was 51 percent compared to 81 percent for whites.

Rosin claims that it would be "particularly perverse for a public institution like Berkeley to ignore calls for diversity." The fact is that Berkeley-style diversity only serves to increase racial tensions, self-segregation and to drive students out of college. The only thing students at Berkeley learn from this diversity is racial enmity, and a false perception of minority inferiority.

JORGE AMSELLE
Center for Equal Opportunity
Washington, D.C.

Hanna Rosin replies:

The author of the Diversity Project's report, Professor Troy Duster, is Berkeley's staunchest defender of affirmative action. By tendentiously picking out certain numbers in his report, Amselle manages to reverse its conclusion. Take his point about wealthy minorities: rich blacks are an anomaly, and probably don't need affirmative action. The *average* family income of black and Chicano applicants is about $35,000, less than half that of whites. Given this disparity, admitting minority students with a 3.4 GPA who are in the top eighth of the state's graduating class doesn't seem like a great disaster. Duster certainly doesn't think so.

Log rolling

To the editors:

As a political law specialist I never cease to be amazed by the audacity of lobbyists and PAC managers. Their willingness to flout the federal criminal law is at once bold and incredibly risky. Evidence of this trend was revealed in Richard Tafel's letter to the editors (October 23). Incredibly, Tafel admits to a tacit quid pro quo for the Log Cabin Republicans' PAC contribution to Senator Bob Dole in exchange for scheduling a vote on the Ryan White CARE Act. As many former legislators and lobbyists around the country have discovered, discussing legislation at a campaign fund-raiser invites federal prosecutors to use this circumstantial evidence as the grounds needed for the government to obtain an extortion conviction.

This apparent direct connection between legislation and fund-raising has rapidly increased the public's cynicism about the political process. Shame on the Log Cabin Republicans for contributing to it.

BRIAN MAAS
Sacramento, California

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

NOVEMBER 20, 1995

RUN, COLIN, RUN!

Well, why not? We say this not because all journalists have an interest in making electoral races as lively as possible (although we do); nor because we believe Colin Powell is obviously preferable to the current candidates in the field (including the incumbent). General Powell is a man of many, quite obvious deficiencies as well as virtues. We have no special fondness for him, and a hefty dose of skepticism. His preternatural caution, his lack of a distinctive politics, his foreign policy timidity, his apologism for the military establishment and his lack of domestic policy experience: these all count against him as a candidate. We were, indeed, the first media outlet to subject him to lengthy and tough scrutiny (see "The Legend of Colin Powell," TNR, April 17). But when a figure emerges who is plainly sane, competent, charismatic and decent—and who commands wide public support—the right question to ask is: Why *shouldn't* he submit himself for election to the presidency? It seems to us that, in this respect, the burden of proof always lies with those who want to limit the electorate's choices rather than expand them.

And the list of people urging a premature narrowing of those choices makes for interesting inspection. Patrick Buchanan. Gary Bauer. Bob Dole's campaign staff. *The Wall Street Journal.* Ralph Reed. The pulse quickens. The sectarian right, by equal measures of flim-flam, organization and media skill, have succeeded in co-opting the Republican race so far. No wonder they're desperate to keep Powell out. They have ratcheted the party so far toward rightist puritanism that the only genuine moderate left in the race is Arlen Specter. Bill Weld didn't even try to enter. Pete Wilson, despite dousing himself in rightist rhetoric, never caught alight. And Bob Dole is increasingly a cipher of opportunism. It says something that Newt Gingrich now appears as a refreshing, open-minded contrast to this dour, acidic crew. Who knows, if Powell were to enter the race, the rest might even have to start defending their positions instead of vying with each other to shout them the loudest.

Besides, the Republicans against Powell are caught in a contradiction. On the one hand, they argue that the GOP has now become synonymous with the conservative revolution, that the rank and file are thoroughly and genuinely Newtered. On the other, they're panicking that a Rockefellerite is about to triumph in open primary elections. Well, which one is it? We suspect the far right knows that its hold on the average GOP voter is actually quite tenuous; it needs to keep them out of the primaries and out of the party in order to win. We hope the right fails. And if Powell is the means, so be it.

Yes, there are many difficult and testing questions to ask of Powell on many fronts. But these questions are far better asked in the context of a declared election campaign than as a way to stop that campaign from starting in the first place. And, yes, there are plenty of Washington Establishment types who are delighted to see Powell run, since he is so clearly one of them. The naked cynicism of the capital's power-hungry Powellites—Bill Kristol springs effortlessly to mind—is not a pretty sight. Indeed, anyone concerned to change the status quo in this country has no reason, at this stage, to see Powell as an agent of that change. But in one area, at least, Powell is an unwilling and unwitting revolutionary. If he emerged as the Republican candidate, or even if he broadened the base and tone of the Republican race, he could seriously weaken the religious right's tightening stranglehold on the country's dominant party. Run, Colin, run! •

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NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT: Surprised by the apparent coordination of recent riots by inmates at federal prisons across the nation, Republican presidential candidate Bob Dornan asked, "What do they got, jungle drums?" ... Traffic signs depicting a stooped figure as a warning for elderly pedestrians were rejected by Pennsauken, New Jersey, officials, who feared the signs would tip off criminals to areas with vulnerable residents.... Officials in Belfast debated whether to invite President Clinton or the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers to light the city's Christmas tree.... Congresswoman and new mother Enid Waldholtz scheduled a $500-a-head "fund-raising shower" in the name of her 8-week-old daughter.

FORGETTING JERUSALEM: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem..." says the Psalmist. Congress did not forget when it mandated that the U.S. Embassy be moved to what's been the capital of Israel since 1949. In not forgetting, it also remembered Bill Clinton's oft-repeated pledge over many years to move it himself, if elected. In fact, the legislation, passed by veto-proof margins in both Houses, will now become law without the president's signature. His refusal to sign is yet another incidence of bad faith. He'd extracted two concessions from the Congress: that the date of the embassy's move be held off from 1996 to 1999, and that, if "national security" (not mere "interests") warranted, the move might be delayed for six-month sequences. So why were even these compromises not good enough for him in the end? Because the State Department, fresh from analytic coups in Bosnia and North Korea, thought the Arab world would have a fit if the U.S. moved the embassy. But neither the Palestinians nor other Arabs have thrown such a fit because they know that the stars and stripes flying in Jerusalem doesn't preclude any deal with the Israelis for an official Palestinian presence in the city. It wouldn't preclude it—but, of course, it wouldn't guarantee it either. What Clinton has done by stymieing the move is to foolishly lead the PLO to believe large parts of Jerusalem might still be theirs. A curious role in the present dispute has been played by the U.S. ambassador, Martin Indyk, who, with James Baker's old marionette, Dennis Ross, lobbied frantically against the law. Unlike former U.S. ambassadors to Israel Walworth Barbour and Malcolm Toon, he is the incarnation of a timid diplomatic soul. In days gone by, Foggy Bottom refused to send an American Jew as our emissary to Israel, fearing that the Jewish state would divide his loyalties. But now that we do have an ambassador who is both a Jew and a Zionist, his every move is calibrated to prove he can be as indifferent to Israeli sensibilities as any State Department Arabist.

CRACKING HEADS: Last week's rioting in federal prisons called attention to a recent vote in Congress. Both houses blocked a reduction of the mandatory minimum federal sentence for crack-cocaine possession proposed by the federal sentencing commission. Sentences for crack are now 100 times more severe than those for powdered cocaine: five grams of crack, for example, compared with 500 grams of the powdered stuff, gets you five years in jail. About 90 percent of the 14,000 federal prison inmates serving time under the crack law are black—compared with about a third of those in prison for powdered cocaine. The GOP argument that crack is a more potent and addictive substance—and more commonly linked to violence—carries weight, but it hardly justifies a 100-fold disparity. That's why the bipartisan sentencing commission—nearly 500 of whose previous recommendations had been upheld—recommended a change. The change was a little drastic—equalization of sentences, with consideration of aggravating factors, such as violence, in sentencing. But some shift would be welcome. How about halving the differential by doubling the sentencing guidelines for cocaine? That would keep crime-reducing crack laws on the books, and do a little to address racial grievances. Compromise, anyone?

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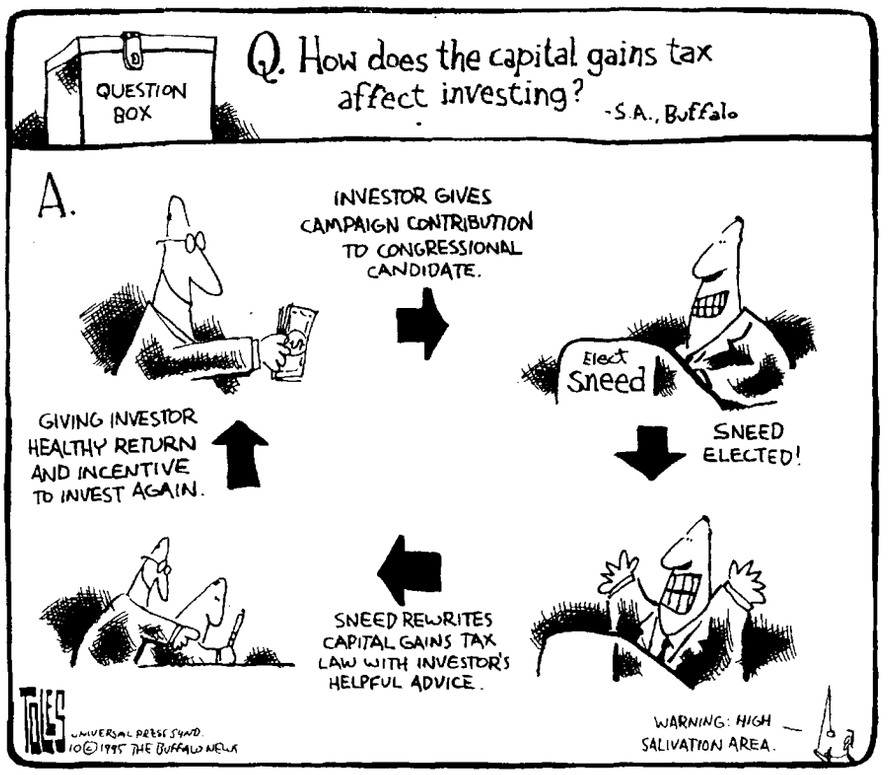
TOUGH GUYS: As everyone scrambles to catch the austerity bandwagon, one group of pols has won the hearts of the nation's editorialists. *The Washington Post* recently endorsed a budget plan released by the "Coalition"—a loose-knit group of conservative Democrats in the House. Lauding the plan as an effort to rise above special interests, the *Post* gushed that "It is tougher and more credible than the president's mushy proposal." "Remarkably sensible, though tough," echoed *The New York Times.* Not so fast. Yes, the Coalition sanely balances the budget without massively shifting wealth upward. But the plaudits failed to note the plan's cop-out on an issue on which the Republican budget is braver: farm subsidies. While the Republicans propose gradually eliminating costly and unnecessary commodity subsidies, the Coalition preserves them for perpetuity. As it happens, these programs disproportionately benefit both the voters and agribusinesses that heavily support Coalition members. Nobody said it was easy being tough.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THERE HE GOES AGAIN: After backtracking from his comments that he raised taxes too much, President Clinton admitted Thursday he didn't like his own welfare bill either. Clinton called Ben Wattenberg, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, to chat for almost an hour about his forthcoming book *Values Matter Most* (The Free Press). During the interview, Wattenberg told the president that he disliked his welfare bill, calling it soft and weak. Clinton responded, "I wasn't pleased with it either." The president's latest flip-flop is disturbing on several counts. The bill was neither soft nor weak, requiring welfare recipients to take community service jobs after two years. Unlike the current GOP reforms, it was adequately funded. After disavowing his second major initiative in as many weeks, Clinton can no longer contend that his bizarre self-repudiation is not a conscious campaign tactic. Or was the call to Wattenberg after 7 p.m.?

SPLIT IRAQ, NOT CANADA: King Hussein of Jordan has enunciated in public a deep truth about Iraq that almost no one in power, least of all in the U.S., has ever dared utter. This truth is that Iraq can be maintained intact only through a brutal, no-questions-asked tyranny, like the one that has governed it ever since Saddam Hussein came to power. As currently configured, he argued, Iraq will always be a deadly threat to its neighbors. The King's proposal that Iraq—an artifact of British imperialism—be dismantled on federal lines, devolving real authority on its Shi'a majority as well as on the large Kurdish minority, has one aim: to remove power from that tiny cohort of people from Saddam's hometown, Tikrit, who have hijacked the entire, small Sunni constituency as their own. These are the religious and ethnic loyalties which define life in Iraq. If they are not given real voice, the only voice to be heard will be Saddam's. Which is to say, the voice of terror.

MALCOLM X-FILES: In the wake of the Million Man March, commentators have labeled Louis Farrakhan one of the most dangerous men on the planet. In fact, he may be one of the most dangerous in the solar system. In a 1990 breakfast meeting with *The Washington Post,* Farrakhan described an intricate government conspiracy to kill black men, which he likened to Pharaoh's biblical slaying of Jewish firstborn males. The source of his information? A visit to an enormous "wheel" similar to a spaceship. While traveling in Mexico in 1985, Farrakhan says he was transported into "a huge, mechanical object that is above our heads." There, former Muslim leader Elijah Muhammad—who had died ten years earlier—spoke at length about U.S. foreign policy. The *Post* ran a transcript of the interview, but the accompanying piece strangely downplayed Farrakhan's loopy UFO reveries. The author of the piece? None other than Farrakhan's future ghostwriter, *Post* staffer Nathan McCall.

ALL IN THE FAMILY: TNR is pleased to announce the release of contributing editor Maggie Scarf's new book, *Intimate World: Living Inside the Family* (Random House).•

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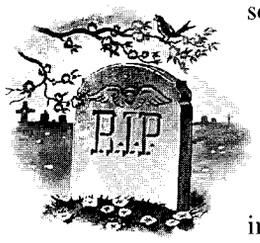
AFTER YOU'VE GONE

CHERRY ON TOP

By Stanley Crouch

When trumpeter Don Cherry died at 58 in Spain on October 19, one of the most potent figures of a largely inept jazz avant garde was gone. Cherry was open to all manner of experimentation—some fruitless, some even inane—but his very best work was grounded in the fundamentals that all true jazz innovators must reinvent—blues, 4/4 swing, the romantic ballad and Afro-Hispanic rhythms. Such grounding was central to the musical weight of the Ornette Coleman Quartet that Cherry was a member of when that band left the wild west of Los Angeles and brought a new language of improvisation to Manhattan for an engagement at the Five Spot in the winter of 1959.



In that legendary Bowery club, what was soon called "free jazz" took its place at the forefront of controversy. In retrospect, the moment was perfect. At a time when the broad vitality of jazz that stretched from Louis Armstrong to Miles Davis was countered by failed experiments at melding the music with twentieth-century concert hall techniques, something loose and greasy, devoid of academic pretension and soaked in a liberated feeling for the blues could be heard lacing the air with innovative fire and the anxious sting of modern American life. Coleman, bearded and playing a white plastic alto saxophone with shrill charisma, and the skeletal, round-headed Cherry, with a midget instrument to his lips that he called a "pocket trumpet," were given unprecedentedly protean support by the dark, heavy bass of Charlie Haden and the light, pearly drums of Billy Higgins.

Where they succeeded while so many others since them have failed was in maintaining a deep feeling for the improvised melody line that sustained connection to the blues and swing. Dewey Redman, the superb tenor saxophonist who often worked with Coleman and Cherry, observes, "People forget that Ornette and Cherry were always swinging. Other people came after them and started playing sound effects and all that—noises. Noise is cool, if you can dig it, but that's different from what Ornette and Cherry were doing.... You listen to them and you hear the roots a new way, but they're still the roots."

In Coleman's music, Cherry took a position in the jazz vanguard parallel to the one Dizzy Gillespie had to Charlie Parker in the middle '40s: he helped spread the aesthetic that the Coleman Quartet delivered with such authority. That had much to do with Cherry's substantial intelligence.

On the now-classic recordings that he made with Coleman for Atlantic Records, Cherry is the quirky and buoyant brass stylist informed by Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Clifford Brown and Fats Navarro. His lyrical assertions of dreamy optimism counterpointed by heartbreaking aches, the flippant wit of his rhythms, the bold, bold declarations of curiosity and the willingness to risk jarring failure in pursuit of an improvisational firefly were Cherry's gift to the art of jazz. Even his technical limitations didn't do him in. Cherry was adept at startling shifts of register. The long, melodic lines and piquant attacks unexpectedly swelled into singing phrases that rose up over the beat in velocities sometimes so contrary that the meaning of syncopation was extended to include surprising ideas about tempo itself. Perhaps it was the juxtaposition of heat and frailty, of humor and wounds, that gave his work such emotional allure.

Cherry completely grasped what Coleman's fresh ideas demanded in terms of group and individual effort. Their ensemble lines were executed so compatibly that, even in stereo, Coleman and Cherry often give the impression of a single instrument. In a profound way, he comprehended the nexus of primitive and sophisticated that was at the center of Coleman's art. Cherry's command of nuance included bold tonal colors that frequently cropped up in his work and were as deep as the rasps, yowls and cracks of backwoods blues. As with all great jazz musicians, he was a true listener. Few could hear so clearly into another horn player's sound and create such unification of color. He played for the music, for the group and for himself, which is why community was such an important concept to him, whether or not his fellow musicians were on his level. Just as Dizzy Gillespie's interest in Afro-Cuban rhythms sparked a trend, the breadth of Third World scales, colors and rhythms, which Cherry discovered in his travels, greatly influenced the sound and direction of his generation.

Complete Communion, recorded on Christmas Eve in 1965, is his most important work away from Coleman. It features two compositions in which themes skillfully lead one into the other on a recording of such beautiful clarity one wonders what has happened to engineering technique over the last thirty years. Throughout, Cherry marvelously blends his sound with that of saxophonist Gato Barbieri. He brings together things he had learned from Coleman with his own explorations of Third World music, linking them through blues and swing, with bassist Henry Grimes and drummer Ed Blackwell laying down some of the finest grooves ever caught by microphones. This document and those Atlantic recordings with Coleman form a perfect memorial to an artist whose concern for giving fresh eloquence to the musical expression of our humanity was most perfectly achieved when he was young, bold and pointing the sound of his horn at timeless possibilities. •

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Monopolies Win, You Lose.

People are speaking out against the telecommunications bills passed this past summer by the Senate and the House.

People who are concerned about higher prices, less competition, and fewer voices being heard. People outside the telecommunications industry.

People who favor deregulation -- but believe we're missing an historic opportunity to do it right. Here's a sampling:

USA TODAY "Monopolies win, you lose."

The Boston Globe "...consumers...were short-changed in the legislative process.".

The Sacramento Bee "...the bill leaves the Baby Bells...with too much power to choke off competition and raise rates to local customers in order to subsidize their ventures into the long-distance field... this bill appears to tolerate levels of concentration that could effectively drive out any diversity in opinion or information in certain communities."

The New York Times "... it risks putting local phone companies in a position to drive rivals out of business ...it could also end up concentrating control of the main media outlets -- newspaper, TV and radio -- in too few hands... In rural areas, under this bill, a powerful media magnate could buy up *every* source of news, including the local phone company."

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH "Prices would rise... [It] goes much too far."

The Oregonian "...a single owner could control all the media outlets and communications links in a given market -- a scary monopoly."

THE DENVER POST "If the current bill becomes law, phone prices may rise and consumers will have fewer -- not more -- choices."

WORCESTER TELEGRAM & GAZETTE "...the legislation would extend the monopolistic control of the seven Regional Bell Operating Companies...by permitting them to enter the long-distance marketplace *before* they are forced to face local telephone service competition from long-distance carriers or cable companies."

The Philadelphia Inquirer "Slow down in deregulating the info highway, or the public will get run over."

BusinessWeek "If Congress really wants a free phone market, with the competition and lower prices that will come with it, it shouldn't be quite so generous to those local monopolists, the Baby Bells."

THE TENNESSEAN "...the problem with the bill is that it removes most telephone and cable rate restrictions without first assuring that competition is in place."

The Seattle Times "...the bill would intensify the communications industry's instinct to monopolize markets and raise prices."

the Charleston Gazette The State Newspaper "...the bill trashes long-time rules that have restricted concentration of media ownership... Deregulation and 'reform' have increasingly become code words for freeing huge corporations from the government oversight that prevents them from gouging the public and developing stifling monopolies."

Chicago Business Crain's "...the telecommunications bill winding its way through Congress would maintain local phone service monopolies in Chicago, and most of the rest of the country..."

Chicago Sun-Times "Until the public is convinced that its interests are being served, special interest legislation can well wait on hold."

Detroit Free Press "This bill would tilt the field even further in favor of existing cable TV and phone companies. In the end, the trick would be on consumers."

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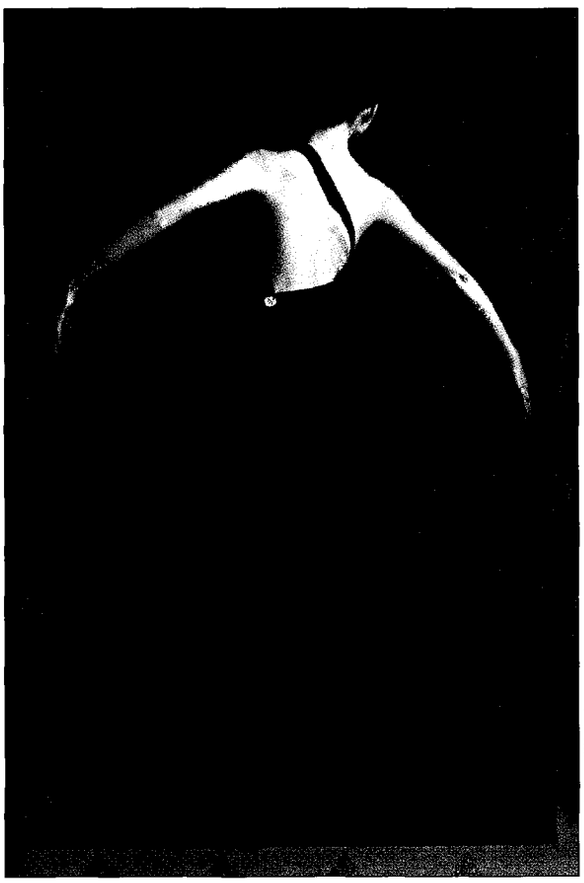
A fashion maestro vs. grunge.

BEENE THERE

By Laura Jacobs

I compromised when I first worked for clothing manufacturers who preferred versions of Parisian clothes rather than any self-expression. I compromised when business partners were content for me to make only little empire dresses stiffened to hide a multitude of sins. I stopped compromising when I bought my own business and went "soft," moving in on the body and all its glory.

This is the designer Geoffrey Beene speaking, and in three sentences he not only distills the early flight pattern of his career, he encapsulates a mini history of American fashion in the second half of this century. First there's the '50s stress on couture at all costs, that biannual Paris push and scramble, dresses quickly copied and mass produced. Next comes the '60s blast-off, when a new generation of designers took Balenciaga's Mont Blanc-big, stiff-as-cream empire line and cut it off above the knee to create a space-capsule silhouette. The sins it hid weren't just figure flaws. And then the '70s: silky synthetics, earth-mothery textures, granny glasses perched on oily noses.



Photograph by William Laxton

FROM *GEOFFREY BEENE UNBOUND*

Beene, of course, had parted ways with the fashion flock by then. His use of the word "soft" is personal and poetic, not simply a tactile reference to the stretch jerseys, sensate wools and antebellum laces he would favor. Beene's "soft" is the first definition in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, "comfort, ease"; it is also an archaic imperative—to enjoin silence, to listen—and it hears the "softer" sex. Rather than play the male couturier as maestro, dictating the tempo and dynamic of a woman's movements through controls like corsetting, hem length, the degree of pinch at bosom and armhole, Beene began a heart-to-heart with female form that is today unmatched in its decorum. With Beene, respect leads to revelation, a connection he makes electric through acts of architectural, if sometimes invisible, daring.

Which is one reason his work is so rarely the subject of big fat spreads in fashion magazines (it's the art and design journals that keep tabs on Beene). New is god of the trade glossies. When Calvin Klein shows Soviet-drab, greige A-lines to the knee for '94, and then flits to Balenciaga's boxy suit with 7/8 sleeve for '95, that's the kind of new the industry can sink its teeth into—from cold war to cold wrists! The meaning has more to do with marketing shifts than with the inner or outer lives of women. Beene, however, once he saw the light, or rather, the soft, would go in only one direction.

Not backward. A Beene label means no postmodern appropriation and thrift-shop recycling, no mind games. His is the modernist's ethic of energy engaged, of flow in both its physical and psychic dimensions. Sure he honors history—one thinks of those Regency tucks at the shoulder blades, the screen-siren sheaths, the Secessionists' pointed geometries and his almost Victorian regard for gloves, the way they attend that plush pillow where palm meets wrist, a seat of sensibility. But instead of slowing the clothes down, these historical glances scan like grace notes, flashes of temperament, that live deep within Beene's high-wire, free-fall design.

During fashion week, spring and fall, the Beene show occupies the first spot on the last day. It's a position of gravitas, climactic yet understated, a hushed hour in which the week's hype and overkill give way to technique and truth—to art. With a thirty-year retrospective at New York's Fashion Institute of Technology just last year, a comet streak of recent collections, and Brenda Cullerton's buoyant new book, *Geoffrey Beene* (Abrams), this American master is in full creative force—as flush and fresh as was choreographer George Balanchine in the 1970s. Like Balanchine, Beene has made a career of seeing women, of freeing them from cliché constraints; his collections, frequently danced, read like repertory. One of the thrills of Beene, made vivid in the book, is the way the syntax of his seaming achieves a degree of articulation synonymous with thought. His concentration on the bias, for instance, isn't merely about material worked on the diagonal, it is a slippery slope to clothing that weighs less and gives more; it is

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about risk and generosity, and it embodies a bias toward the unknown and the untried.

You can face the unknown with exhilaration or you can hang back in fear. But who'd have guessed that in 1995 we'd see a mass exodus to those decades Beene recalls leaving with such relief? This fall's ready-to-wear collections are swimming in noncommittally similar satin copies of late-'50s Paris couture; they're brimming with stiff little '60s empire dresses. There is one difference, though, between then and now. The reverse time travel to France goes via Milan, through the house of Prada, fashion's current temple of New.

If there is any label that has swamped the moment, it is that of the Milanese luxury luggage company, updated in the '80s by the founder's granddaughter, Miuccia Prada. The number one influence on ready-to-wear these last few years, Miuccia's reign began with a backpack, which is what you need to carry the company's press kit of glossy gush. Reading these articles is an Escheresque experience, a circle of manicured hands-holding-pens, the same p.r. piece written over and over again. The legend is as follows: founded in 1913, Prada went strong for decades and then went stale; granddaughter Miuccia snubbed the family business for studies in political science and a stint with a mime troupe; sensing one day that fashion wasn't entirely antithetical to feminism, Miuccia took on the company and made it over in her own image. To this I would add that it's the poli-sci student, not the mime, that surfaces under Prada's silver triangle logo.

Courtesy USA/PRADA

FROM PRADA'S FALL 1995 COLLECTION

Prada first caught the industry's eye with backpacks, totes and handbags made of the black nylon used for military tents. Crafted as if from the finest materials, they combined practicality with an irresistible reverse snobbery. They're still the best thing Miuccia's done and the most true. That tent nylon is a perfect pun on the troop mentality of the fashion press, its sleek soldiering to shows and store-rooms. The pun becomes a premonition, however, in the way it shadows Prada's approach to clothing design, her rifling through the decades—especially the war years of the '40s and the socially embattled '60s—for shapes and fabrics.

In today's press kit, we see her rifling through her room-sized closet: "One day Miuccia might wear a twenties lingerie dress with Gatsby jade and diamonds; the next, she might look like an awkward girl on her first day of high school, the one who has pulled the sleeves of her navy cardigan down over her wrists, and whose skirt hits her calves at just the wrong point. 'You know, I never look in the mirror,' Miuccia says." This breathless bit is actually a pretty fair definition of Grunge, that disastrous, early '90s, Seattle-band sloppiness. In fact, Prada is the high-tech, well-tailored transfiguration of Grunge's gloomy eclecticism—second time around.

Just look to Prada's fall collection. Empire dresses as matronly as milk bottles, with matching Queen Mother coats; school uniform pleat-suits; Courreges's dropped-waist coatdresses. The fabric of choice is radzimir, a dusty-sheened wool-silk blend that has traditionally been used for mourning clothes, its starchy character an extra support for the bereaved. And, while the pieces hanging this minute in Barneys and Bergdorf Goodman come in cutting-edge shades of tomato soup and handgun grey, in slim sizes 4, 6, 8 and 10, they're still that old, hard-as-armor, Lexington Avenue, Foulke & Foulke dressmaker suit beloved by buxom dowagers and now retired to thrift shops everywhere.

Prada is informed by a suspicion that no one line is better than another and that fashion as pure design is dead. Miuccia herself admits, "I'm not exactly a designer, but I know how to pull design elements together." The Spring '96 collection, just shown, said as much in the program note: the inspiration was banality. Indeed, the ascendance of Prada is the ascendance of the fashion house as juggler of media memories, style-meister tossing off second-hand sensations. And yet this hide and seek in old clothes is already a tired game, not the fun it pretends to be, but a stall for time. I look at Prada, and inside the cool I see disassociation, women haunting their pasts, high on the scent of perfume mixed with mothballs, a funeral frisson (granny's gone, mother's next...). Those black nylon bags with the silver triangle are carrying cases for a late-twentieth-century form of blissful nothingness. What a weird twist on the term "timeless." Meanwhile, Beene's females are leaping into the twenty-first century, his star treks flying solely on a seam. The difference between these two schools of design is faith.

LAURA JACOBS is a contributing editor at *Vanity Fair*.

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THE MEMO

By Charles Lane

By now the slaughter of Bosnian Muslims after the United Nations-declared "safe area" of Srebrenica fell to Serb forces last July is as thoroughly documented as it is sickening. *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* have published detailed accounts of the disaster, filling out earlier stories that appeared elsewhere, including these pages. (See "The Fall of Srebrenica," August 14.) An October 30 report by the government of the Netherlands exculpates Dutch peacekeepers for Srebrenica's fall, blaming United Nations officials who denied the battalion air cover it desperately needed. Though the Dutch took much-deserved heat for the passive conduct of their forces in the face of Serb abuses, this time they have a point. Scandalous as the bare facts of the massacre are, there is another scandal, involving the machinations of European, American and U.N. officials in the weeks before the massacre—machinations that helped ensure the Serbs would attack and that the U.N. would betray Srebrenica at the last minute.

The story begins in the last week of May. By this time, Dutch peacekeepers in Srebrenica were already reporting suspicious Serbian troop movements. But U.N. officials ignored the warnings. The French officer serving as U.N. commander in the former Yugoslavia, General Bernard Janvier, who had partial control over the U.N. half of the U.N.-NATO "dual key" for ordering air strikes in the theater, was busy lobbying the Security Council to radically modify, and weaken, its commitment to protect "safe areas" such as Srebrenica with air power. As he outlined it, the plan would have replaced armed deterrent forces such as the Dutch battalion with observers monitoring a negotiated cease-fire, if possible. He also urged that the U.N. give up the heavy weapons collection points around Sarajevo where Serb artillery pieces were being held under the terms of a hard-won exclusion agreement forged in the wake of the bloody February 1994 mortar attack on a Sarajevo marketplace.

Janvier claimed the risks to U.N. forces now outweighed the benefits. The Serbs could overpower the U.N. troops guarding the sites any time they wanted to, he said, so the Serbs effectively had control over the weapons anyway. His case for pulling out of the safe areas hinged on another proposition: that the Bosnians themselves were to blame for the safe areas' plight. Bosnian attacks against surrounding Serbs, he said, were an abuse of U.N. protection and destroyed the U.N. force's credibility with the Serbs. "Air power cannot be used when both parties are responsible for the outbreak of fighting," he insisted, according to sources present at one briefing.

Janvier's proposal was not, however, his alone. It was the "Option D" devised earlier by Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali himself. In a memorandum circulated a week after Janvier's briefings, the secretary general, echoing the French general's critique of the Bosnians, expanded on the idea. "The safe areas mandate requires [the U.N. force] to cooperate and negotiate daily with a party [the Serbs] upon whom it is also expected to call air strikes in certain circumstances," Boutros-Ghali wrote. He called this "a predicament which my Special Representative, the Theater Force Commander, many of the troop contributing Governments, and I myself no longer consider tolerable." The "troop contributing Governments," of course, meant Holland, Canada and, most important, permanent Security Council members Britain and France, whose concern was that air strikes to protect a safe area would expose their troops to reprisals. As a senior U.S. official says, "the issue came down to one word—hostages. We heard it over and over again."

How valid were these arguments? It is true that an ill-fated Bosnian offensive out of the Bihac safe area in November 1994 sparked a fierce Serb counterattack, thus compounding the suffering of Bihac's people. And troops from Srebrenica were staging hit-and-run raids to capture weapons and food. Boutros-Ghali often complained that U.N. member countries had not provided the thousands of troops he sought for a defense of the safe areas, leaving those who were in place dangerously exposed. The risk of hostage-taking was real. Around the time of Janvier's and Boutros-Ghali's pleas, the Serbs were seizing hundreds of U.N. peacekeepers in reprisal for air strikes on Serb positions near Sarajevo. The U.N. agreed, reluctantly, to these modest strikes at U.S. insistence, after a series of outrageous Serb attacks on the weapons collection points.

However, it is now clear that Janvier and the U.N. were already inclined to write off these collection points *before* the Serbs made this move against them. And, of course, one reason U.N. troops were vulnerable to hostage-taking was that U.N. rules of engagement forbade them from using their weapons aggressively to defend themselves. Under these rules, the Serbs also had a veto over how much weaponry armed troops defending the safe areas would be permitted to carry—an obvious absurdity, and another good reason why countries balked when the secretary general asked them for troops.

More generally, Boutros-Ghali and company had misread the causes of the war and the motivations of the Bosnian Serb Army. Their case was premised on the longstanding U.N. article of faith that all "warring factions" in Bosnia were equally to blame—though the safe

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areas were set up in the first place because of savage Serb efforts to cleanse eastern Bosnia of its Muslim population. They assumed appeasement would bring peace. The best strategy, in the U.N.'s eyes, was to eliminate any Bosnian hope for Western military help, then let the Serbs have what they wanted.

During Janvier's May briefings, Madeleine Albright, the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., upbraided the general for treating the Bosnian sides as morally equivalent. "It's like blaming a rape victim for fighting back," she told him. Perhaps if NATO air strikes were more frequent and more robust, she argued, defensive attacks by Bosnian forces would be less necessary, and the Serbs would think twice before taking precipitous action against the U.N. force. But Janvier and his backers knew Albright represented only the hawkish wing of a divided U.S. administration. President Clinton seemed frozen between his fear that Sarajevo would fall on his watch and his fear that bombing, and hostage-taking, would trigger Britain and France to pull out—leaving Clinton without the U.N. fig leaf he needed to cover his own lack of a policy.

In the policy vacuum, Boutros-Ghali, Janvier and the U.N. special representative in former Yugoslavia, Yasushi Akashi, seized on the hostage crisis of late May and early June to make their policy of retreat operative. When the last hostages started getting out on June 13, Alexa Buha, the Bosnian Serb "foreign minister," announced they had been freed in return for a U.N. promise of no more NATO bombing. The U.N. denied this, but, according to a June 14 *Washington Post* account, U.N. officials "acknowledged that the possibility of a NATO strike now is minute, in part because the Serbs have shown how easily they can take U.N. troops hostage.... Before seeing its men rounded up and humiliated," the *Post* continued, "the U.N. mission here appeared committed to banning the use of heavy weapons around Sarajevo and preventing Serb assaults against six Muslim enclaves designated 'safe areas'...."

In fact, the U.N. commitment had already been privately backed away from; now it was being made to vanish altogether. When the U.N. did agree to accept a heavily equipped Anglo-Dutch-French Rapid Reaction Force as a supposed means to prevent future hostage-taking, Akashi immediately undermined it. He sent a letter to the rebel Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic, saying that the new force would abide by the old toothless peacekeeping principles.

Thus, a mere five weeks before Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic actually launched his attack on Srebrenica, the European governments contributing troops, Boutros-Ghali and the U.N. hierarchy in former Yugoslavia itself were united against defending the safe areas with air strikes. Mladic cannot have failed to read these multiple signs that his hostage threat had cowed the international community, and that Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde were therefore his for the taking. Indeed, in hindsight, the cruelest irony of the Srebrenica affair is that the Dutch troops, and the people they were supposed to defend, ever believed that Janvier might protect them.

As we now know, he did not. Instead, in the final hours before the safe area fell, Janvier repeatedly balked at ordering the air attacks that might have stalled the Serb drive. "Gentlemen, don't you understand? I have to get rid of these enclaves," he cried in response to one air strike request, according to *NRC Handelsblad*, the leading Dutch newspaper. On the night of July 10, Dutch troops were told by Dutch officers in the U.N. headquarters to expect heavy bombing of the Serbs the next morning. Janvier had requested a NATO armada to take off at dawn, and he had a list of dozens of Serb targets preselected by the Dutch in Srebrenica. So sure were the Dutch of a big attack that they warned Bosnian troops defending the south of the enclave to evacuate the area before it was pounded. In the event, Janvier, with Akashi's approval, ordered only a pinprick raid, well after the Serbs began pouring through the gap in the town's southern defenses.

We are left to wonder what purpose Boutros-Ghali thought "Option D" would serve. His May 30 memorandum suggests that, for him, the issue was not saving Bosnia but saving the U.N.:

> The United Nations is currently experiencing in Bosnia and Herzegovina dramatic events that recall other crises which have afflicted its peace-keeping operations in past decades. The Organization's reaction to these events will again have a decisive effect on its standing for many years to come.... In dealing with them we must not lose sight of three interconnected objectives which represent the very essence of the United Nations: the quest for peace, the protection of human life and the rejection of a culture of death. These objectives will take time to attain and they will be attained only through the successful use of non-military methods.... Finally, the credibility of the United Nations is of the utmost importance and must be safeguarded at all times. Few things damage it more than to give United Nations peace-keepers tasks which cannot be done in prevailing circumstances.

But the U.N.'s own refusal to order air strikes resulted in just the outcome Boutros-Ghali feared: the blue helmets stood by as a "culture of death" enveloped Srebrenica, and U.N. peacekeeping lost its last remaining shreds of credibility. The Euro-U.N. strategy of appeasement, in which the United States had acquiesced, became untenable. It took an American-led air campaign, coupled with an offensive by Croat and Muslim ground forces, to bring the Serbs to the bargaining table.

The secretary-general had also written: "We must not put more lives in jeopardy for the sake of short-term solutions." That is exactly what Janvier did when he refused to send enough planes to Srebrenica—though, admittedly, the lives he put in jeopardy were only Bosnian. If the U.N. worked like a normal democratic state, there would be a procedure for investigating and, if warranted, punishing, officials whose decisions contributed to a catastrophic defeat such as the fall of Srebrenica. But the U.N. is a multilateral nebula, not a democracy. Its functionaries answer to "the member states," which means they really answer to no one. •

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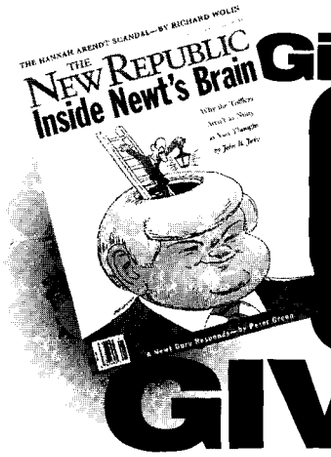

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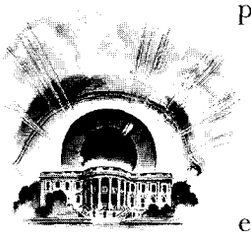
WHITE HOUSE WATCH

DICKS

By Matthew Cooper

In July, 1994, when Bill Clinton was touring Europe, the president's aides were, well, awestruck by the tenacity of Richard Holbrooke, then the United States Ambassador to Germany. What accounted for this reaction? During the president's visit to Germany, Holbrooke was, as one official put it, "a whirling dervish." He managed to wangle his way into top-level meetings and hounded White House staff to get airplane and helicopter seats close to Clinton. He kept annoying top White House officials with electronic pages, alerting them to interesting developments such as Germany's World Cup defeat and picayune ones such as the switch of courses for a scheduled Clinton dinner with Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Clinton staffers were incredulous. As one administration aide put it at the time: "The guy's unbelievable."



Little did Clinton staffers know that Mr. Unbelievable would wind up supervising the most volatile foreign policy issue facing the administration—Bosnia. Holbrooke, now at the State Department as the Assistant Secretary for European and Canadian Affairs, is in Dayton, Ohio, this week, trying to shepherd the Bosnian peace talks that are taking place thanks in large part to his shuttle diplomacy in the Balkans. If he pulls it off, Holbrooke the nudge could wind up with a Nobel.

The rise of Holbrooke has a significance beyond his own charmed résumé or even peace in Bosnia. It says a lot about the changing culture of the Clinton administration. Today, that culture is less kindly than when the Clintonites took over in 1993. Nothing epitomizes this more than the rise of what some staffers call The Two Dicks, Morris and Holbrooke. (Dick Morris, of course, is the fantastically flexible political consultant Clinton has brought in to save his presidency.) The two personify a Washington truth, a human truth. Sometimes it takes a nudge, even a jerk, to get things done.

When the Clinton administration came to Washington in 1993, they had a different idea. Clintonites enveloped themselves in what might be called a culture of niceness. Genial types gave the Clinton White House a kinder, gentler cast than George Bush's regime, where the likes of John Sununu instilled fear and resentment. Mack McLarty, Clinton's first chief of staff, even earned the moniker "Mack the Nice" because of his courtly manner. He was the anti-Sununu, genial to a fault. Whereas Sununu would be brusque in any meeting, McLarty was quick to thank anyone for "visiting" with him. Economic adviser Bob Rubin, a Wall Street millionaire more reminiscent of Warren Buffett than Gordon Gekko, was also an avatar of niceness. Clinton staffers were first introduced to this side of him in the fall of 1992, when Rubin came to Little Rock to meet with Clinton and brought a cake for weary staffers.

The idea behind all of this niceness, said Clinton officials at the time, was to create a team atmosphere in which, according to the Total Quality Management principles that the president so admires, cooperation would replace confrontation. The dictum extended to the mid-level culture of Team Clinton, too. Former Communications Director Mark Gearan was more likely to tap out Broadway showtunes on the piano than yell. Deputy Domestic Policy Adviser Bruce Reed—who White House press members thought could be played by the fresh-faced Ron Howard in "Clinton: The Movie"—was also known as a great conciliator. To be sure, there was plenty of backstabbing in Clintonland. David Gergen, for one, got the shiv. And there were tough guys, too, like the First Lady. But compared to the tempestuousness of Sununu or Don Regan or Hamilton Jordan, the Clinton White House was downright temperate.

But, as the Clintonites found out, amiability is an overrated quality. More niceness equaled less discipline. Meetings dragged on because everyone got to be heard. Decisions dawdled. Even after the arrival of more fiery types like Deputy Chief of Staff Harold Ickes, the culture of nice pervaded. Ickes was still the odd man out in early 1994 when he shocked senior White House officials who had gathered for a Roosevelt Room meeting on the Whitewater affair. After McLarty had offered an assessment, Ickes weighed in in more eschatological terms: "They're fucking us blue." But such bombast was the exception. Ickes remained a lone tough guy in a White House saddled by inertia.

No more. Today, Holbrooke and Morris set the tone for an administration that is more cutthroat but more efficient, too. The two share a preternatural sense of ambition that, White House officials grudgingly acknowledge, make them good for their jobs. For one thing, both have been willing to make their grievances public. Before he returned to Clinton's side, Morris, according to Republican operatives, made a living out of telling the GOP that Clinton—his client back in the late '70s—was a man with, er, certain weaknesses. Morris denies saying this, but several Republicans have been quoted in recent weeks, especially in an article by the *New York Post*'s Deborah Orin, noting that Morris was eager to share the dope on Clinton with anyone who'd pay his consulting fees, including Bush. Likewise, Holbrooke openly told reporters about his frustration with the lack of U.S. and Western military retaliation for Serb atrocities.

Morris and Holbrooke were not only willing to break ranks, they broke china, too. "Each of them came in under circumstances that were a mess," says a senior Clinton adviser. "They had motive, but they also had

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opportunity." Morris insinuated himself in every corner of the White House, shaping policy, taking issues that had languished and turning them into weapons the president could wield. These days, for instance, Morris is telling Clinton on welfare reform that he should sign the harsh Senate bill and/or the budget but that he can't veto both. Issues like teenage smoking and the balanced budget and food safety lay untapped before Morris's arrival. Sure, Morris pushed too far. A proposed radio address on Japanese trade that Morris crafted earlier this year was, in the opinion of one official, so harsh that it read like another Hiroshima. Likewise, many at the State Department initially thought Holbrooke was what one aide deemed too "disruptive" for the Bosnia job. According to Clinton officials, pushing from Strobe Talbott and others at State overcame the objections.

Both Dicks, notes one senior Clinton official, are devout students of history. Pro-Contra in the '80s, Holbrooke knew that diplomacy would only work if matched by force. Morris, for all the criticism that he's taken, understands that Clinton needs to create what Morris (rather pretentiously) calls a Hegelian synthesis, a melding of conservatism and liberalism into a politics of the center. The pushiness has paid off for both Dicks. Holbrooke (along with American air power and the Croatian army) helped propel the peace process to Dayton. Morris has come up with a strategy that's buoying Clinton's political fortunes—at least for now.

To be sure, Holbrooke and Morris are very different. Holbrooke craves the cameras. Morris is the Jackie O. of political consultants, shunning interviews, making privacy paramount. Holbrooke is a Manhattan sophisticate who moves in a world of Carnegie Endowment symposia and Bilderburg conferences. He dated Diane Sawyer before marrying Kati Marton, the ex-Mrs. Peter Jennings. Morris, a streetfighter, lives modestly in suburban Connecticut, has no office with his name on it and works, like a traveling salesman, from a cellular phone and a pager. Holbrooke undersells results. He constantly says that Bosnia won't be a quick fix. Morris is notorious for overselling. He's been saying privately that Clinton's re-election may be assured by next spring—more than six months before voters actually go to the polls. And Holbrooke, ultimately, is a more serious, formidable person. Morris is and always will be a mercenary's mercenary.

Still, the two share an innate rattle-the-cages sensibility that the Clinton administration is grateful for. Clinton has told friends that he personally feels indebted to Holbrooke for helping to ease a political and moral problem that once seemed intractable. And despite rumors that Morris was on the outs, following revelations about his having worked on a number of GOP campaigns that trashed Clinton, no one in the president's inner circle thinks that Morris is going to be let go anytime soon.

It would be nice, of course, to think that nice people should rule the world. But the lesson of the Clinton administration is different: nice guys finish last, but that can be a good thing. Sometimes, it takes a Dick. •

The strange rise of Christian fiction.

POWER ANGELS

By Alissa Rubin

In a town under siege by Satan, one of the Angel Tal's comrades vanquishes a dozen evil spirits with his sword and shoots into the sky blowing his golden trumpet. His call rallies every angelic warrior in the land, and one after another they burst out of houses and fields in a blaze of white light. Meanwhile, the acolytes of Satan shiver in their mountain hideaway; the great battle is about to begin.

Is this a scene from a never-released sequel to *Blade Runner*? A new video game? A lost chapter from C.S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia? No, it's a passage from *Piercing the Darkness* by Frank Peretti, a novel that has sold an astonishing 1.4 million copies. Peretti is the Tom Clancy of Christian fiction—a genre whose leading exemplars are not included in *The New York Times* best-seller list but, if they were, would regularly be near the top.

Peretti's books started as slow sellers in Christian bookstores in the mid-'80s. Then perky, pro-life pop singer Amy Grant began promoting them at her concerts, and sales took off. Now Peretti, a fortysomething former Assembly of God preacher from Vashon Island, Washington, has become one of Christian fiction's first crossover authors, his books as easily found in B. Dalton and Waldenbooks as in religious bookstores. He recently switched publishers from the mid-sized Westchester, Illinois-based Crossway to Word, the giant Dallas religious publisher whose other authors include Pat Robertson and Chuck Colson. His latest book, *The Oath*, has been outselling Pope John Paul II's. Yet unless you are a conservative Christian you have probably never heard of Peretti or of spiritual warfare, the doctrine at the center of his more than half a dozen books. And, if you have never heard of them, you are missing out on a particularly vivid means of apprehending the Christian right's worldview.

Piercing the Darkness, Peretti's second novel, may be his purest distillation of that view. The novel begins in the little town of Bacon's Corner, where former hippie Sallie Beth Roe has just moved, hoping to escape a blighted past. But despite its reassuring, "Our Town"-ish name, all is not well in Bacon's Corner. The town's Christian school, the Good Shepherd Academy, is under attack by the local chapter of the American Citizen's Freedom Association (or ACFA), which Peretti helpfully describes as "that infamous association, one could say conspiracy, of professional, idealistic legal

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technicians, whitewashed, virtuous and all-for-freedom on the exterior, but viciously liberal and anti-Christian in its motives and agenda."

ACFA lawyers go after Good Shepherd's devout schoolmaster Tom Harris, accusing him of meting out corporal punishment. Local government officials—only slightly less evil than ACFA lawyers—decide that Tom, a widower, is unfit to care for his own children. The kids don't even have time to pack their Bibles before they are bundled off to godless foster parents.

Meanwhile, Sallie Roe (no relation to Jane of course) is on her own journey of self-discovery. Not long ago she murdered her infant daughter while in a trance brought on by evil demons. Now she has begun to reject her past life and to repent for her New Age beliefs. Visiting a professor at the liberal arts college she once attended, Sallie suddenly realizes that it was in these halls of learning that she went astray. Gazing around his office, she sees: "The walls holding hundreds of books ... looking like they were leaning more and more toward the center of the room.... There was something oozing into this room, something from her childhood nightmares." Once these volumes had seemed to be the repositories of wisdom but now, she recognizes, "that monster, that unseen voracious enemy ... hiding behind the books, maybe wriggling through them. This room was alive with evil.... A row of angry, golden eyes glared at her from the book shelf.... They were faces, ghastly triangular faces all staring, all seemingly snarling at her. Little gargoyles, deep vacant eyes, bared teeth."

The book's plot unfolds against a backdrop of warring angels and demons. With each of Sallie's triumphs over her misguided past, the good angels gain strength, though it is only in a last battle, complete with *Star Wars* special effects, that evil is fully vanquished. The book ends as a new crop of converts joins the fundamentalist Good Shepherd Community Church.

OK, I know this is hardly *The Brothers Karamazov*, or even *The Bridges of Madison County*, but there's something here that can keep even a secular reader (myself included) oddly enthralled. The theological underpinning reaches back to St. Augustine's writings on the devil and to a Manichean vision: the world is gripped in a great battle between God and Satan, with man's soul as the prize. Peretti's iteration of this war is a late-twentieth-century parable, filled with battle themes familiar to Christian conservatives. Its moral, which evidently finds acceptance among a far wider audience, is this: liberal thought, politics and legal interpretations are inextricably tied to something degenerate, corrupting and ultimately evil.

The term that Peretti has popularized for the battle is "spiritual warfare." After Peretti started writing about the phenomenon, it became part of the conservative Christian vernacular. Now it's the subject of a flourishing non-fiction genre as well: books like *Warfare Prayer* by Southern California Minister C. Peter Wagner and *A Woman's Guide to Spiritual Warfare* by Ruthanne Garlock and Quin Sherrer, which offer guidance to readers enmeshed in battles with Satan.

In Christian fiction in general, and Peretti's books in particular, these battles acquire a palpable, even a visceral, reality. When I call Jill Carter, an editor at Peretti's first publisher, Crossway, she is quick to say of his books, "Now, I want to be clear, these are all fiction. We get lots of letters from people who believe they are real." In *Piercing the Darkness,* the demons of Despair, Insanity and Fear are Sallie Roe's constant, literal companions, taunting, tempting, seducing her to commit suicide. And they are described in all their corporeal horror. The idea of devils choosing human victims to seduce is familiar to readers of C.S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters,* not to mention *Dr. Faustus.* But where those books described devils as intellectual inveiglers, Peretti's are almost cartoon-like icons of evil.

The other half of the spiritual warfare equation are, of course, the angels. Peretti's are right out of a child's illustrated version of the Bible. Height: seven feet. Dress: white tunics. Accessories: swords bright as fire. Capable of: flying fast as the wind. They are the Green Berets of the heavenly host. They have special powers (they can revive the sick, become invisible, take the shape of men) and, like John Wayne or Clint Eastwood, have longstanding appointments with the forces of evil. When Tal, the leader of the Angels, meets Destroyer, the leader of the Satanic forces, they realize that they last fought each other once before, at Babylon.

The key, however, to the angels' potency is also the key to the basic moral of the tales. Peretti's angels are only strong when fundamentalist Christians are praying. Their prayer creates a sort of Scotch Guard shield that hides the angels' presence from the evil demons and dark forces.

In Peretti's books, those who do the bidding of the dark forces range widely, from mediums who channel spirits to ministers who preach in Christian, but non-fundamentalist, churches to people who listen to New Age music, or practice folk medicine, or do yoga, or promote outcome-based education or teach psychology (young female professors fare particularly badly). And the list goes on. In his world, the righteous never compromise with the secular, and bargains are what you make with the devil. There is no struggle with thorny questions like how one can be a tolerant believer or what it takes to maintain one's faith in a fallen world. As Sallie Roe says when she is born again, she knows now that there is "a fence, a standard of good and evil."

All this may sound simplistic, paranoid or worse, but these books do appeal to a larger readership than fundamentalist Christians. And while the demonization of all that is "other" may be disquieting to some, clearly many readers find comfort in Peretti's moral warfare on modern society. This is hardly a new tradition in America, it's just that Peretti has updated it: introducing Cotton Mather to Stephen King.

ALISSA RUBIN is a senior writer at *Congressional Quarterly.*

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

An 'Average' Standard

Could raising academic standards in public schools do more harm than good? Believe it or not, some educators think so. Making the curriculum more challenging, they argue, will only lower the grades of average students and raise the failure rate of students who are just getting by.

Then why do overwhelming majorities of parents in all racial and ethnic groups support higher educational expectations for their children? As I wrote recently, parents are frustrated and discouraged with public schools because they know children aren't getting what they need academically, in some cases not even the basics. What they want, parents keep saying, are safe, orderly schools where high standards of conduct and achievement prevail. Are parents simply misguided?

For years, we've told ourselves that U.S. schools offer broad opportunity while other systems focus on the elite.

Of course not. But we don't have to take it on faith. There is powerful evidence that they are right. The latest report in AFT's *Defining World Class Standards* series shows that in other industrialized democracies, students of *average* ability—not just the university-bound achievers—meet much higher academic standards than their U.S. peers do. These findings add to the picture painted in an earlier AFT report, which showed that close to a third of seniors in other countries pass required graduation exams comparable to our Advanced Placement tests. (These are taken on a voluntary basis by only 7 percent of U.S. seniors and passed by 4 percent.)

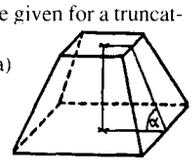
The new AFT study, "What Secondary Students Abroad Are Expected To Know," provides translations of required national exams taken by average-achieving 9th- and 10th-grade students in France, Germany, and Scotland. Remember, these students are not in the top 25 percent of their class. They represent the middle and lower-middle ranks, the kids who will go on to jobs or vocational training after high school. Two-thirds or more pass the exams!

These 3-7 hour tests in history/geography, language, math, and science differ from country to country, but they all require students to explain their answers, display their math and science proofs, and write essays; no exam contains multiple-choice questions. For example:

Scotland. Chris needs a ladder to put up a television antenna on the wall of a house. The ladder is 5 meters long and has to reach 4.8 meters up the wall. For safety, the angle between the ladder and the ground should be between 71° and 76°. Can Chris use the ladder safely? (Give a reason for your answer.)

France. Causes of the First World War. First, explain the indirect causes (imperialism and nationalism) which facilitated the appearance of European networks of alliances. Briefly, describe these networks. Next, tell how the crisis at Sarajevo was directly responsible for the First World War.

Germany. The following are given for a truncated square pyramid:



$d_1 = 10e\sqrt{2}$ (diagonal base area)
$d_2 = 4e\sqrt{2}$ (diagonal top area)
$\alpha = 60°$

Demonstrate without the use of rounded values that the volume can be calculated using the formula, $V = 156e^3\sqrt{3}$.

It's a very sad day for any student who fails the exam, because a lot rides on it. Successful students receive a diploma or certificate that carries both their exam and course grades. The certificate determines which academic or vocational opportunities they qualify for next—university preparation, technical institute, academic-vocational program, apprenticeship, or employment. It's a passport examined by prospective employers and educators alike.

Attaching meaningful consequences to achievement is probably *the* most important thing these countries do to motivate students to work hard. But they also provide a common academic curriculum from the first year of school up to the secondary level. The content at every stage, and the quality of work required, are spelled out in national or state standards, so all parents, students, and teachers know what has to be accomplished in each grade.

Disruption and violence are not tolerated, and students know that misbehavior will have an impact on their academic and vocational prospects. And finally, students move into one of several "tracks" for the last two or three years of high school. But no track has a throw-away program—unlike curricula for the 70 percent of American students who don't go on to four-year colleges. In other countries, the technical, vocational, and apprenticeship tracks remain academic in focus and standards are rigorous. Students who do well on a lower track are able to move to a higher one, and some do.

For years, we've been telling ourselves that our schools offer broad opportunity while other systems focus only on the elite; that we seem to do poorly because we test everyone, while other countries test only their top students. The fact is that other countries have opened up their educational systems to diverse populations while maintaining high standards for all.

America's parents understand that low standards do more damage to children than high ones ever could. Teachers know this, too, but they can't raise standards unilaterally. The people who set them—school boards, administrators, state and federal lawmakers, college officials, and employers—have to decide to make school count.

For a copy of *What Secondary Students Abroad Are Expected To Know*, send $15 ($12 each for five or more) to AFT Order Department, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. Ask for item #251.

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1995 by Albert Shanker.

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Selena goes to heaven.

DREAMING OF YOU

By Ilan Stavans

During a recent trip to South Texas, I talked to a respectable old man who told me Selena had died because heaven was desperate for another cherub. Selena was "a celestial beauty," he sighed, "whose time on earth was spent helping the poor and unattended." In San Antonio, a mother of four has constructed an altar at home, with the dead singer's photograph surrounded by candles and flowers, just below the image of the Virgen de Guadalupe, Selena's holy predecessor among Mex-Americans. Amalia Gonzalez, a Spanish-language radio host, told a journalist that Selena had visited us "to unite all creeds and races." And a young lady from Corpus Christi, one of Selena's passionate fans, who spends a good portion of her days singing "selenatas," swears she has repeatedly seen Selena's ghost at night on her TV screen—once her set has been turned off.

SELENA BY JOHN SPRINGS FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Welcome to *la frontera*, a land of kitsch and missed opportunities where bizarre dreams and hard-working lives intertwine. Made up of 12 million people, its capital is Tijuana, where *el día de los muertos*, the Day of the Dead, remains the most popular holiday, an occasion for the living to spend a long night of food and joy at the cemetery, at the side of their beloved deceased. *La frontera* is where NAFTA and Kafka cohabit, where English isn't spoken but broken, and where *yo* becomes I, and I turns into *Ay, carajo*—a free zone, autonomous and self-referential, perceived by Mexicans as *el fin del mundo*, the end of the world, and by Anglos as a galaxy of *rascuachismo*, i.e., low taste.

Elvis, John Lennon, Kurt Cobain and Jerry Garcia ... roll over: Selena is here to grant voice to the silenced and oppressed. Née Selena Quintanilla Perez, a Jehovah's Witness with a perpetually bare midriff and an electric voice, she's the uncontested queen of hybrid pop culture, part wetback and part *gabacha*. Her life might have been short and tragic, but death has granted her an imposing stature. At 1:05 p.m. on Friday, March 31, 1995, she became immortal: short of her 24th birthday, she ceased to be the tejana singer she had grown up to be, with modest means and high ambitions, ready to cross over to the mainstream market, and became not only a fearsome competitor to Madonna (her album *Dreaming of You*, with a handful of songs in English, including one by David Byrne, sold 175,000 copies in a single day) but a cult figure, a Hispanic Marilyn Monroe—an object of relentless adoration and adulation. Magically, she has joined Evita Perón in the contemporary pantheon of mystical and magical *hispanas*, a patron saint of the *descamisados*.

How many of us far from *la frontera* had heard from her before her fatal end? Not many, really. But even if we had, her music is *cursi*—melodramatic, cheesy, overemotional, not too far from Juan Gabriel and a relative of Julio Iglesias. In the end it doesn't matter: her *conjunto* pieces, as well as the mental unbalance of Yolanda Saldivar, the woman convicted of the singer's murder last week and sentenced to life in prison, are only props in a theatrical act that presents Selena as a superstar regardless of her talents. Selena was a symbol, not a genius.

A life quilted by sheer coincidence, when studied in retrospect, takes the shape of a perfectly designed odyssey. By a strange luck, Selena's killing took place on César Chávez's birthday. In an already legendary scene Saldivar comes out of Room 158 in Corpus Christi's Days Inn on Navigation Boulevard with a .38-caliber revolver. Blood, tears, desperation. Selena is ahead of her, wounded, crying for help. She names her assassin and then dies a close-up death. Commercial cut: *Vea El Show de Cristina*. The next scene takes place minutes later, as Saldivar seals herself in a pickup truck with a pistol to her temple and, à la O.J., keeps the police at bay for nine and a half hours. Saldivar had been a fan, then a good friend, then a business partner in charge of Selena, Inc., the company

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comprised of the singer's boutiques and beauty salons in Corpus Christi and San Antonio. She had been embezzling funds, and Selena had come to confront her. But what really went wrong between the two women? Stay tuned and catch the answer in our next episode, in the form of a Hollywood movie by director Gregory Nava, who brought you *El Norte*, about the plight of poor Guatemalan immigrants in *el otro lado*.

Selena's father, a singer and Tex-Mex restaurateur named Abraham Quintanilla Jr., whose family has been in South Texas for at least 100 years, forced her to learn *español* in order to further her career: English was her first language, but he thought she could more easily find a following singing in Spanish. Her debut, at age 5, was in her father's group, *Los Dinos*. Less than two decades later, married but with a sexy public persona built around a halter top and tight pants, she was a Grammy winner worth more than $5 million. She was lucky, then, to die just as her crossover dreams were beginning to materialize.

For those mourning her, she was a brave, astonishingly courageous chicana, ambivalent about but never ashamed of her background. Selena drove her Porsche to the Wal-Mart. "You'd see her shopping at the mall," people in South Texas told me. "And you'd see her working at home. A real sweetheart." They like to recall how accessible she was—*una de nosotros*: Selena performed in Mexican variety shows and soap operas, from the long-running *Siempre en Domingo* to the melodrama *Dos mujeres, un camino*. Small parts, no doubt, but the real *sabor*: corny and sentimental. Had Selena been visited by the angel of death only a few years later, a very different story would have been told. She would have been an American Star, and her misfortune would not be useful today to highlight the reticence with which *la frontera* in particular, and Latino culture in general, is taken in by the rest of the country.

Now Selena is a pantheistic deity in *la frontera*—everywhere you look, there she is: on TV screens and CDs, on book covers and calendars, on velvet slippers, T-shirts, lithographs, baseball hats, stickers, plastic bracelets, shampoos and *piñatas*. In Texas, more than 600 baby girls have been named after Selena in the months since her death. "Thanks to her, tejanos are being heard," a disk jockey from Houston told me. "She put us in the news—and on the front page of *The New York Times*." George W. Bush, the governor of Texas, whose knowledge of tejano culture, according to most Mex-Americans, is nothing but null, declared April 16, 1995, Selena's birthday and Easter Sunday, *El día de Selena*. There's a move to issue a postage stamp in her honor and to build a plaza with her statue in its center in Corpus Christi.

Meanwhile, many people north and south of the Rio Grande have been engaging in active prayer to Vírgen Selena, their own Madonna, so that heaven above might send some miracles to *la frontera*: more *dólares* descending once the media craze is over, for instance; or a less condescending attitude toward its idols while they are alive. Otherwise Mex-American youngsters might get the wrong message, thinking they will only be heard by Anglo ears after they are dead and buried.

ILAN STAVANS is the author of *The One-Handed Pianist and Other Stories*, to be published by The University of New Mexico Press.

ON THE HILL

A GREEN COUP?

By Paul Roberts

Although environmentalists aren't yet publicly swilling champagne, there are plenty of signs that the conservative campaign to "reform" environmental protection is, mercifully, falling on its face. Opinion polls show renewed support for imperiled species and habitats. The normally timid Clinton administration is fearlessly bashing the GOP's anti-ecological "jihad." And in October, two of the conservatives' most cherished objectives—gutting the Endangered Species Act and beggaring the Environmental Protection Agency—were derailed by no less than House Speaker Newt Gingrich.

Party conservatives blame the reversals on extremist Green propaganda, and, in fact, the movement has been extremely busy since last November. But Gingrich and his moderate peers are reacting to a more fundamental political reality: environmental reform may be only a small part of the Republicans' national agenda, but no other set of issues has provoked so many lapses in party unity or so dramatically highlighted the GOP's geographical fissures. Indeed, some of the harshest environmental debates in recent months have occurred not between Democrats and Republicans but between Eastern GOP moderates and their conservative kin west of Mississippi.

That environmentalism is proving so divisive is hardly surprising. Out West, where timber, mining, ranching and other "extractive" interests are still mega-businesses, right-wing politicians view land-use regulations as the modern-day equivalent of desegregation laws. Since the late 1980s, an amalgam of property rights and pro-development activists—the so-called "Sage Brush Rebellion"—has attracted considerable support and, in 1994, elected some of the most conservative, anti-regulation congressional lawmakers in recent memory.

By contrast, most of the internal opposition comes from a block of thirty to fifty moderate lawmakers, hailing primarily from suburban districts in the Midwest, East

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and especially the Northeast. Congested, overdeveloped and polluted, these are places where environmental regulation is still regarded as prudent and where voters actually like the notion of ancient trees and scampering wildlife—even if they're thousands of miles away.

Early in the 104th Congress, Western conservatives seemed unstoppable. Desperate for votes to pass the Contract, Gingrich placated them. Moderates, fearful of spoiling Newt's first 100 days, were willing "to grit our teeth and make some huge compromises," according to New Jersey Republican James Saxton. Besides, at that point few details of the conservatives' environmental agenda were known.

As news filtered out in early spring, however, and public opinion began shifting dramatically, the moderates began to gain nerve. In May, when House conservatives pushed to reform the Clean Water Act, Maryland Republican Wayne Gilchrest pointed out that the measure would strip federal protection from most of the nation's remaining wetlands. Unable to dissuade House leaders, Gilchrest led about three dozen moderate GOP lawmakers to vote against the bill. The rebellion failed, but it marked the first time this session that GOP leaders lost control of the party's left wing. "That was the biggest bloc of Republicans that had broken ranks up until then," recalls the League of Conservation Voters' Paul Brotherton. "From a leadership standpoint, it was serious."

Throughout the summer, as press accounts of an anti-Republican voter backlash piled up, moderates in both chambers—but especially the House—began bucking the party line. In July, after Majority Whip Tom DeLay and other conservatives attached seventeen budget riders barring the EPA from enforcing water, air and other regulations, New York's Sherwood Boehlert and fifty other Republicans crossed the aisle to defeat them 212-206. (During a surprise evening re-vote the following week conservatives temporarily resurrected the riders.)

A week later, a block of ninety-five GOP moderates and fiscal conservatives defied Western Republicans and House leaders, voting to extend a moratorium on federal mining leases. Even in the Senate, where moderates have been far less willing to cross Majority Leader Robert Dole, Rhode Island's John Chafee, chair of the Environment and Public Works Committee, and five other Republicans helped stall passage of Dole's cherished deregulation bill.

No one is forecasting the balkanization of the GOP. But Gingrich will find it hard to square GOP moderates with the chainsaw brigade to his right. DeLay and Majority Leader Dick Armey, for example, are about as anti-regulation as they come. And some committee chairs, like Don Young of Alaska, appear personally dedicated to erasing two decades of Green legislative victories. Young in particular exemplifies the Speaker's problem. The 62-year-old Resources Committee chair has not only led the charge on some of the most controversial measures—among them, gutting the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil companies—he has done so in a surprisingly boorish fashion. During a series of committee hearings last spring, Richard Pombo, a California Republican and Young's point man on ESA reform, stacked the witness lists with ranchers, farmers and other aggrieved parties while systematically excluding wildlife experts. And in October, when Gingrich pleaded with Young to tone down his reform bill, the Alaska representative, according to one congressional source, "didn't just say 'no,'—he said, 'HELL no.' "

At the recent Western States Republican Leadership Conference, regional conservatives like Nevada Representative Barbara Vucanovich insisted that the "Western conservativism in which we believe so strongly is now the prevailing philosophy in Congress." But with opinion polls showing 60 percent of voters from both parties opposing the GOP's anti-environment war, Gingrich has begun listening more intently to the party's center. Congressional sources say it was Gilchrest who last spring impressed Gingrich with the importance—both ecologically and politically—of biodiversity; shortly afterward, Gingrich reined in Pombo. And last month, as moderate strength increased, Gingrich indefinitely postponed action on both Young's ESA reform and the EPA riders.

Perhaps most tellingly, Republicans of all stripes are now engaged in frantic, if dubious, damage control. The Speaker has asked Gilchrest to lead a House environmental task force, although, according to one GOP staffer, "no one has been appointed, and it's questionable whether it would do any good this year anyway." Conservatives, meanwhile, have launched their own spin campaign. In an October 17 memo, the House Republican Conference informed members that they were being unjustly smeared as "anti-environmental, pro-polluter, and hostile to the survival of every cuddly critter roaming God's green earth." The memo, titled "Think Globally, Act Locally," suggested fifteen ways lawmakers could improve their environmental standing, including participating in local tree plantings, joining Earth Day festivities and using recycled office materials. "The time to act is now," warned the memo. "To build credibility you must engage this agenda before your opponents can label your efforts 'craven, election year gimmicks.' "

The warning comes a bit late. At last month's committee markup of the ESA reform measure, five major church organizations condemned Chairman Young's legislation in very unchurch-like terms. "An analysis of the [ESA] bill clearly reveals that the primary motive behind this legislation is not to protect God's creation," wrote the United Methodist Church's General Board. "We believe the driving force behind this legislation is greed." When it comes to God's green earth, even the Big Guy is getting tired of conservatives.

PAUL ROBERTS covers environmental issues for *Outside Online.*

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THE NEXT COLD WAR

By Jacob Heilbrunn

The United States and China are not on a collision course. They have already collided. Now that the Soviet empire has disappeared, the façade of harmony between Beijing and Washington has begun to crumble as well. It began when China, enraged by the extension of an American visa to Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui, tested missiles off the Taiwanese coast and threatened war should the United States abandon its official one-China policy. Then came the detention of human rights activist Harry Wu. Most recently, despite the Clinton administration's desperate attempts to put a favorable gloss on the meeting, Chinese President Jiang Zemin's obvious disdain for President Clinton during their icy minisummit last week in New York revealed the depth of antagonism between Washington and Beijing. Indeed, as China repeatedly snubs the U.S., it is becoming increasingly clear that China aspires to become not just a great market but an even greater power.

This is the second postwar breakdown in relations between the U.S. and China—and it's recreating an old fault-line in American foreign policy. The first rift appeared after the communist takeover of China in 1949, when the cold war turned global and the "who lost China debate" erupted. Now a new debate is brewing. Two schools of thought exist: the first might be called engagers; the second, containers. Engagers include Clinton administration officials like Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs Winston Lord and Defense Department official Joseph Nye, academic experts on China and pundits like Henry Kissinger. They represent what has become the orthodox view on China. Engagers believe that the economic benefits from cooperation between the United States and China far outweigh any potential conflicts. To isolate China would condemn the world to a new spiral of military confrontation. Instead, they argue that the burden is on the United States to integrate China into the world community and to transform it into a responsible power that will help maintain stability in Asia. "America and China," wrote Kissinger in *The Washington Post,* "have a parallel interest in equilibrium in Asia."

Containers have none of this. Scornful of what they deem the self-defeating attempts of the Clinton administration to appease the Beijing dictators, containers fired their first shots in July. With appropriate Henry Luce-like fervor, Charles Krauthammer, in an essay in *Time,* called for undermining the Beijing regime. This was followed by a rousing editorial blast in *The Economist* that sent the official Chinese press into a frenzy. Containers demand that the U.S. cozy up to Russia and Japan in order to undermine the Chinese regime. "Unless the United States begins to see things as they are, and to play an active role in deterring China and shaping Asian affairs," fumes Arthur Waldron of the Naval War College in the October *Commentary,* "it will pay the eventual and possibly catastrophic price."

Neither the engagers nor the containers, however, capture the realities of the U.S.-China relationship. Both are frozen in fossilized cold war models of economic détente or military confrontation. They have merely replaced the old "who lost China" debate with a "who can win China" debate.

But what if China cannot be won? What if it does not become powerful enough to menace the U.S. directly? What if, indeed, the Chinese challenge is an entirely predictable product of the end of the cold war that the United States should calmly meet? In truth, China is not becoming a global power. It's becoming a spoiler state, one that uses military and secret service links to maximize its power abroad. The correct response to this is neither engagement nor containment—but calm balancing. The United States must rely on a more subtle balance of power politics that will permit it to check China where its interests conflict with America's and cooperate with it when they do not.

One of the ironies of the current confrontation between Washington and Beijing is that in large part the U.S. is responsible for the emergence of China as a regional power. Ever since Secretary of State John Hay issued the famous Open Door notes in 1899, the United States has opposed the dismemberment of China. Walter Lippmann could state as obvious in 1943 that the "issue which precipitated the Japanese-American War in 1941 was the refusal of the United States to give Japan a free hand in the conquest of China." The clear American policy was that a united China served as a counter to both Russia and Japan. Nixon and Kissinger's recognition of China in 1972, then, was simply a return to the traditional tenets of American foreign policy.

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Nixon and Kissinger may have ended China's pariah status, but they also aroused exaggerated expectations of perpetual peace that China would never fulfill. A good deal of American disappointment and frustration can be traced to the naïve hopes that the Nixon administration reposed in China during the flush of recognition. But the relationship between the two countries, which was based on cold geopolitical realities, had no chance of transforming Beijing into a complaisant ally. In the 1970s and 1980s the United States tried to play China

Red army

In October 1994, the U.S. aircraft carrier *Kitty Hawk* encountered a Chinese nuclear attack submarine in the Yellow Sea. Some unnamed U.S. officials in the December 14 issue of *The Los Angeles Times* remarked that Chinese vessels had rarely been spotted here before. In February 1995, the Philippine government was shocked to discover Chinese warships and garrison stations on the Mischief Reef, claimed by Manila, in the Spratly Islands. In late July, Beijing began temporarily blockading Taiwan by testing missiles and artillery in designated waters near the island. Seventeen years after Deng Xiaoping launched an ambitious military modernization program in the late 1970s, China is increasingly tempted, and able, to project force against its neighbors.

Nonetheless, most Western observers relentlessly play down the regional threat posed by China's growing military. The People's Liberation Army's (PLA) hardware, they say, is antiquated. In addition, it possesses a weak command, control and communication network and insufficient logistical support, shortcomings that would cripple its ability to conduct high-tech operations at a distance.

Furthermore, they note that, while Beijing is trying to build sophisticated weapons domestically, Chinese technological advance remains slow—perhaps slower than among its more prosperous neighbors. Even the USSR could not match Western military advance, and China lags even further behind. Post-Tiananmen sanctions have also kept China from importing the technology it needs to compete. Finally, Western observers argue that the PLA's rapacious profit-seeking in China's liberalized economy, which has bred immense corruption, has reduced military training and corroded the PLA's fighting spirit.

This common perception of an under-funded, under-trained, under-equipped and under-disciplined PLA is far too sanguine, and it mistakenly compares China's military to those in the West, rather than to those in the small, weak neighbors whom it threatens.

While China remains poor compared to many of its neighbors, its economy is booming—providing a financial base for a remarkable military buildup. China's published defense budget has grown at double-digit rates since the late 1980s—but the real figure is at least twice as high. Furthermore, the Chinese dictatorship can spend much more on defense than its neighbors because, unlike many of them, it is not accountable to its citizens.

In addition, the post-cold-war world's increasingly open arms trade has allowed China to buy previously off-limits military hardware. Beijing has procured mid-air refueling technology from Iran and Pakistan and the F-10 fighter design—originally based on the U.S. F-16—from Israel. Thousands of Russian engineers are currently helping China develop missile guidance systems, submarine quieting and probably strategic cruise missiles.

China's selective upgrading of its defense has produced "pockets of excellence" in its Third World army of 2.9 million soldiers. For example, the estimated 200,000-500,000 "rapid reaction forces" are intensively trained, well-equipped and well-paid.

Lastly, and most importantly, China has incessantly upgraded and diversified its nuclear forces. By 1996, analysts predict that Beijing will deploy fast-reacting and mobile intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) with 250-kiloton warheads and a range of 8,000 kilometers. This would supplement the at least fifteen currently operational ICBMs, which, with ranges of up to 15,000 kilometers, can reach the U.S. Simply the knowledge that China could hit Los Angeles might deter the U.S. from intervening in a localized, conventional conflict in East Asia.

In recent years, China has not only grown more able to project force against its neighbors but seemingly more willing. China's February 1992 Maritime Law asserted sovereignty over wide areas beyond Beijing's immediate control, particularly the Spratly Islands and Taiwan. The Spratlys, some 1,500 kilometers away, were previously beyond China's range. Airfields and ports built since the early 1990s on the southern island province Hainan and on Woody Island in the Paracels, however, have changed this. Now, several Chinese fighter planes can reach the islands, and Chinese warships increasingly patrol its reefs. China could probably seize the Spratlys today. Its lack of aircraft carriers, which would make defending the islands against a serious assault difficult, may be the only thing holding it back.

Taiwan is a much more formidable target. Although its army is one-sixth the size of China's, Taipei has better surface warships, fighter aircraft, command and control systems, anti-submarine and electronic warfare capabilities, as Beijing privately admits. Above all, the island is protected by the Taiwan Straits, three times as wide as the English Channel. China is probably at least five or ten years away from being able to successfully take Taiwan intact. Furthermore, invading Taiwan might not serve China's political objective, which remains reunification and economic gain rather than the destruction of the Taiwanese economy. Even this year's bloodless war of nerves between Beijing and Taipei has led stock and real estate prices on the island, and the value of the Taiwan dollar, to plummet.

Nonetheless, the relationship between China and Taiwan is more precarious today than in many years. This is partly due to Taiwan's growing recognition overseas, and to the island's democratization, which has brought to the fore an opposition party that supports declaring Taiwan independent (and abandoning its present claim to being the legitimate government of the mainland). Such a move would imperil China's goal of reunification, and China has vowed not to tolerate it.

While not yet capable of dominating East Asia itself, China could certainly disrupt the American- and Japanese-led order which has held since the 1950s. With all of its military advantages, the U.S. probably has the means to keep that order. Whether it has the will remains to be seen.

CHONG-PIN LIN

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off against the Soviet Union, but in the end China played the two powers off against each other.

With the end of the cold war, China has launched a new diplomatic and military offensive. Though China initially bemoaned the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, it soon realized that the diffuse post-cold-war order redounded to its benefit. China's emergence on the world stage as a competitor of the U.S. is, in fact, an entirely predictable result of the demise of the Soviet empire. The increase in Chinese power is as much a function of the collapse of its traditional adversary as it is a product of burgeoning economic might.

Central to China's foreign policy is the notion that it must lead the charge against the American attempt to create a unipolar world. China now lobbies, more deftly than it has in the past, to be the spokesman for the Third World: it attends meetings of the nonaligned movement and pushed for the Bangkok Declaration, adopted in 1993 by forty-nine countries, which declared "human rights" a Western notion imposed by the United States. At the United Nations a China-led Third World anti-American bloc may emerge. Indeed, in the wake of the Gulf war China repudiated President Bush's call for a new world order and hauled out the old demand for a socialistic New International Economic Order that the U.N. first drafted in 1974.

CHINESE PRESIDENT JIANG ZEMIN BY JOHN SPRINGS FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

China has also improved its relations within Asia. Japan, of course, is key for China. Japan is China's second-biggest trading partner and acutely aware of its dependence on natural resources from abroad. So, while wary of China, Japan hasn't spurned its overtures. Elsewhere, China has courted Malaysia, whose prime minister shares its contempt for human rights, and has deftly played the two Koreas off against each other, winning loans and business from South Korea in the hopes that it will restrain North Korea's nuclear program. Above all, China hopes to use the ASEAN nations as a counterweight to American penetration of the region. There is, of course, a gap between Chinese aspirations and actual accomplishments. Currently, at least, most ASEAN nations feel no compulsion to choose between the U.S. and China.

So much for the blandishments that China has used to maximize its influence. Less benign are the conceptual underpinnings of Chinese national security. They flatly contradict the assumptions on which American policy is based and threaten to undermine the economic ties it seeks.

To a greater extent than is appreciated in the West, Chinese security policy continues to rest on realist and Marxist theories of history that assume that economic forces are leading the U.S. to seek world hegemony. This analysis leads Beijing not simply to protect Chinese territory but also its culture from further contamination by the West. China eschews binding alliances for fear that the other partner will seek to enlist China for its own purposes and shuns multilateral organizations. It views economic power not as an end in itself but as a means to strengthening military power. The modernization of China's military has clearly led to muscle-flexing in East Asia.

China has taken a particular interest in the Spratly Islands, located in the South China Sea. At first glance, these desolate rocks and reefs, located 800 miles from the mainland, might seem an unusual candidate for a Chinese drive for *Lebensraum.* But the Chinese have for many years had their eye on the islands, which are rich in oil deposits and fishing grounds. In 1951 Premier Zhou Enlai laid Beijing's first claim, and in January 1974 China drove out South Vietnamese forces and seized some of the islands. Soon thereafter Vietnam and the Philippines almost went to war with China over the Spratlys. More recently, China has passed a Territorial Maritime Law that claims sovereignty and has again landed troops on various islands, established oil-drilling platforms and seized Vietnamese ships.

The U.S. has not given the slightest hint that it is prepared to challenge China's claim. In 1992, Secretary of State James Baker refused to comment on China's island-grabbing. Warren Christopher, as is his wont, has been similarly silent. Admiral Richard Macke, the commander of U.S. forces in the Pacific, puts it this way: "What we have to do is make China one of our friends. We can't confront them, we can't isolate them, we don't need a security treaty or anything like that with China."

For China to take control over the South China Sea,

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however, would be a calamity. The sea represents one of the most important shipping lanes in the world—the route taken by most of Japan and Korea's oil imports. To hand over control to the Chinese would give them an economic choke-hold over the region.

Then there is China's bullying of Taiwan. Convinced that the U.S. was about to abandon its one-China policy, Beijing began threatening to wage war on Taiwan should it seek independence. Beijing's bellicosity, however, seems to stem less from a drive for power than an irrational fear that the U.S. was about to double-cross it by re-recognizing Taiwan. Already the flap over Taiwan has died down, and the two Chinas are *sotto voce* pursuing ever-closer economic ties.

More troubling than Beijing's saber-rattling over Taiwan is its rapprochement with Russia. Since the 1980s, Russia has increasingly shipped weaponry to its eastern neighbor. During Defense Minister Pavel Grachev's 1993 visit to Beijing the two countries signed a five-year military cooperation agreement. Between 1992 and 1994 China bought some $2 billion of rockets and nuclear and ballistic missile technology from Russia; in 1995 China's purchases will reach $5 billion.

Given China's steadfast refusal to enter formal alliances, there is no chance of a revival of the Sino-Soviet ties. But there could be an informal arrangement between the two countries in which China, not Russia, would be the senior partner. If Russia abandons its experiment with democracy, Beijing and Moscow might discover that more unites than separates them. Both would fear the military might of the U.S.; both would repudiate its insistence on human rights; and both would abhor its attempts to impose upon them a degenerate, Western culture.

If Beijing has strengthened its military ties with Russia, it has also become a major arms exporter to the developing world. These transfers have both an economic and a strategic purpose, for China seeks to use them to disrupt American influence around the globe. China continues to transfer heavy quantities of weapons to North Korea in order to maintain pressure on South Korea. In addition, China can use North Korea to funnel weapons to rejectionist Middle East states such as Iraq and Syria.

In all of Beijing's national security calculations the U.S. looms as the greatest foe. To Beijing, the United States aims to ensure its hegemony over Asia. China detects nefarious designs in our attempt to create multilateral security arrangements, in our free trade policies and in our continued military presence. The recent Nye report issued by the Defense Department only increases Chinese apprehensions. The report declares that current U.S. troop levels in Asia will endure indefinitely.

Is there any way for the United States to assuage Chinese fears? Probably not. An air of unreality hangs over much professional punditry on China, with the word "should" appearing in most essays: Henry Kissinger's insistence, for example, that "Beijing should end its hard line" is typical. Why should it do anything? What is taking place between China and the United States is not rooted in capricious rivalries but a simple conflict of interests. As a rising power, China is bound to challenge the primacy the U.S. has enjoyed for the past half-century in Asia.

To protect our interests, however, we need not embark on a new cold war against China but merely balance power in the region against it. To that end, the United States should encourage Japan to shoulder some of the burdens of providing for Asian security. The U.S. has already begun such an approach in Europe. For, just as a united Germany is emerging as the counterweight to Russia, so Japan can serve as a barrier to Chinese ambitions. An alliance with India would apply pressure on China's other flank. China's steady supply of military materials, including ballistic missiles, to Pakistan will force India to seek closer ties with the United States. Finally, the United States could begin to use its new relationship with Vietnam to balance against China.

Of course, the U.S. will not be able to create a precise equilibrium in Asia or anywhere else for that matter. What great power ever has? But Japan has already shown that it is willing to assume a greater military role. Already Japan's defense budget is the third largest in the world, reaching $46 billion in 1994. Japanese strategists have themselves begun to recognize that, as a 1995 report by the Japan Forum on International Relations put it, "China's emergence as a major power through economic development will encourage its aspirations for regional hegemony." A Sino-Japanese rivalry would increase American leverage over both Tokyo and Beijing.

The Clinton administration clings to its policy, such as it is, of engagement in China. But there's no sound reason to assume that economic advances will lead to a more docile China; on the contrary, rapid economic growth has traditionally resulted in rapid expansion abroad. The confusion that this has engendered in the Clinton administration is inescapable; by lurching from Winston Lord's declaration to Congress in June that "our policy is engagement, not containment," to pressuring it fitfully on human rights and denying it entry into the World Trade Organization, the administration has created the worst of all worlds: it has convinced the Chinese that the U.S. is implementing a containment policy while deriving none of the benefits that any realistic attempt to check Chinese ambitions would confer.

As China flexes its muscles, the Clinton administration will become increasingly vulnerable to attacks by rabid China containers. Yet, their rantings notwithstanding, China is not emerging as America's primary post-cold-war enemy but simply as one among a number of adversaries. No matter how hostile China's intentions, the limits on its capabilities are severe. Unlike the Soviet Union, China is not, and cannot become, a global threat to American security. The only real choice for the United States is to balance Chinese strength rather than to lead a new crusade to topple Beijing. So far, the Clinton administration has chosen not to choose. •

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A Message from Negative Population Growth, Inc.

Immigration Fuels U.S. Population Growth

We at Negative Population Growth, Inc. (NPG) believe that our country is already vastly overpopulated in terms of the long range carrying capacity of its resources and environment.

We believe, therefore, that U.S. population growth should be halted as soon as possible, and eventually reversed.

But, unless our present massive immigration is drastically reduced, we will never be able to stabilize our population at a sustainable level.

In the decade of the 80s we grew by some 25 million. Immigration, both legal and illegal, accounted for about 40 percent of that huge increase in our numbers. Projections are that we will grow by at least as much in the 90s.

If present rates of fertility and immigration continue, our population, now over 264 million, will pass 400 million shortly after 2050, with no end to growth in sight! Such growth would be catastrophic both for our environment, and for our standard of living.

We need to halt **illegal** immigration and reduce **legal** immigration to a comprehensive ceiling of 100,000 a year, including all relatives, refugees and asylees.

We now allow more than 800,000 **legal** immigrants to come here each year. Their numbers are swelled by over 300,000 **illegal** immigrants who each year settle here permanently.

Advocates of Massive Immigration Are Wrong!

There are powerful forces that fight not only to keep immigration at the present high level, but to increase it. Among them are employers who want low-wage labor, ethnic groups whose leaders seek greater political power, and some humanitarians who believe in virtually open borders.

They also include pro-growth advocates who believe that an ever-growing labor force, fueled by immigration, is necessary to achieve their goal of an ever-increasing GNP. That goal, in the real world of environmental and resource limits, is a recipe for disaster.

How Can We Best Help Others?

Beyond any question, the United States should maintain the humane policies toward immigrants and refugees that have characterized its past.

But we need to express our compassion in an intelligent way. Our priority should be to improve living conditions in the developing countries, rather than to allow vast numbers of their citizens to settle here.

World population is growing by some 90 million a year, and almost all of that growth occurs in the developing countries. We cannot possibly allow more than a tiny fraction of those millions to come here. What can we do to help all those who have no choice but to remain at home?

One thing is crystal clear. The problems of the underdeveloped countries are beyond solution by emigration. To pretend otherwise is simply self-delusion.

Nothing can permanently improve living conditions in these countries unless they first halt their population growth, the root cause of their poverty and environmental degradation.

Those who assert that eradicating poverty is a prerequisite for halting population growth have the process just backwards. Only after halting their population growth can developing countries even begin to bring their standard of living up to an adequate level.

We should spare no effort or expense to help those nations that are prepared to make a determined effort to halt, and eventually to reverse, their population growth.

We Need A Sensible U.S. Immigration Policy

We cannot continue to allow our national immigration policy to be dictated by special interest groups who pursue their own agend as without regard for the broad national interest.

Our immigration policy should be an integral part of a national population policy aimed at halting, and then reversing, our population growth, so that U.S. population can eventually be stabilized at a lower, more sustainable level.

As Americans, our first obligation, to ourselves and to our children and grandchildren, is to restore and preserve the land we have inherited. In shaping our immigration policy, our top priority must be our own national interest, and the welfare of present and future generations of Americans.

To learn more about NPG's recommendations for programs designed to halt, and eventually to reverse, U.S. and world population growth, write today for our **FREE BROCHURE.**

NPG is a national nonprofit membership organization founded in 1972. **We are the only organization that calls for a smaller U.S. and world population, and recommends specific, realistic measures to achieve those goals.**

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

French Saint, French Mortals

Two weeks ago I had coffee with the daughter of a martyred saint. True, the saint was of cinema, but she is venerated with a devotion that fixes her in a special firmament.

In 1927 Renée Falconetti played Joan in Carl Dreyer's masterwork *The Passion of Joan of Arc.* She was an accomplished Parisian actress-producer, but this was her only film. To most of the world she has since existed only as Joan, in a performance so exalted that, because her screen career was coextensive with this one role, she has undergone a transmutation no other film actor has known. Most of the world can think of Falconetti only as Joan. She is the best-known image of that saint, especially since she is unencumbered by other screen images of herself.

No reference book that I know, American or French, tells much more about Falconetti than that she was born in 1892 in Paris, that she had been a member of the Comédie Française, that she emigrated to South America shortly before World War Two and that she died in Buenos Aires in 1946. It seemed somehow right, curious though I was, to know so little about her. What had earthly data to do with her?

Then, a few years ago, a friend of mine who works in the film program at the Alliance Française in New York told me that Falconetti's daughter had published a book about her mother in France. This was a shock: I hadn't known about the daughter's existence and wasn't sure I wanted to know more abut the mother's life. I had the protection of ignorance. I can't read French faster than a page a week, so I didn't see any point in sending for the book. But two weeks ago my Alliance friend told me that Madame Hélène Falconetti was in New York for a few days and that a meeting could be arranged. I couldn't resist.

Hélène Falconetti was a lovely surprise. Her facial resemblance to her mother is so marked that it's almost scary, but her being is quite different. Now 80, she is short, with sheer white hair in a smart short cut, slightly rotund and very animated. She speaks fair English, and my Alliance friend helped with translation. She is a lawyer, has been a judge in Polynesia, and has been divorced twice. "I have eaten two husbands," she said triumphantly. Her life was scarred by the death of her son, Gérard, at 35.

She didn't know her mother very well, but she knows a lot about her. Hélène's father was forty years older than her mother; and Falco, as the daughter and others called the mother, asked her own mother to raise Hélène. Madame F. explained to me that in those days it wasn't good publicity for a young actress to be seen by the public as a family person. But Falco came to visit fairly often. Madame F. especially remembers her visits during the *tournage* of the film—Madame was 13 then—when her mother would talk about this wonderful director with whom she was working.

I told Madame F. that there were many stories about her mother and the making of the film, including the report that at the end Falconetti had almost really been burned at the stake. No, said Madame, but the fire had been hot enough so that a camera had melted and the chief electrician's arm had been burned. I asked whether her mother had left France because of the impending war. No, Madame replied, it had been because of debts she had incurred in running a theater. Falco had intended to move to New York, but when her ship arrived in the harbor, U.S. immigration officials asked for American guarantors of her character and financial state. She could give none and was not permitted to disembark. Eventually she made her way to Buenos Aires, where French friends sponsored her.

She spent her last years in Buenos Aires in poor circumstances, running a small theater school for the children of French families. Until her death, she wrote occasionally to her daughter. Those letters and others, along with programs and photographs and memorabilia, have been donated by Madame F. to the Bibliothèque Arsenal in Paris.

When we parted, she gave me an inscribed copy of the biography. It has many photographs. Most of them—Falconetti with a tennis racket, Falconetti mountain-climbing—are, I suppose, salutary fact. One is a production shot—Falconetti sitting off the set in costume with two women friends in street dress, all smiling at the camera. Imagine. To be able to sit there chatting; then to step before the camera into transfiguration.

Madame F.'s book still awaits translation and publication in English.

Claude Lelouch, the French screenwriter-director-producer, has the gift of

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Clockers. *Spike Lee gives pyrotechnical texture to a commonplace story of black drug-dealing and murder in Brooklyn. (Reviewed 10/2/95)* **Devil in a Blue Dress.** *L.A., 1948. Imitation Raymond Chandler but with a predominantly black cast, headed by Denzel Washington. Most interesting as a harbinger of Watts 1965 and Simpson 1995. (10/30/95)* **A Month by the Lake.** *Vanessa Redgrave vacationing at Lake Como, 1937. Blancmange—which is pleasant enough once in a while. (10/23/95)* **To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar.** *The script is not as good as the title. But Patrick Swayze, Wesley Snipes and John Leguizamo are excellent as three drag queens. (10/9/95)*—**SK**

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overdoing things. He inflates individual scenes, and he distends the structure of his films. But his faults have benefits. From an overflowing Lelouch cornucopia, one can usually select some choice items.

Les Misérables (Warner Bros.) is the best example to date of the Lelouch vice/virtue. Not content to film Victor Hugo, he writes a (somewhat strained) analogous twentieth-century story, including World War II; and he also interweaves scenes from the Hugo novel; *and* he interweaves clips from the 1934 film version. (In those clips we glimpse Jean Valjean as played by Harry Baur, who, not so many years later, was tortured to death by the Germans in occupied Paris.)

The result, as narrative and as contrapuntal commentary, is a mess. But out of this overload some excellences arise. First is the cinematography by Philippe Pavans de Ceccatty, especially in the several snow scenes. When, in a nineteenth-century segment, Valjean is punished for a prison infraction by being locked in a curved outdoor cage in a snowstorm, the image is so paradoxically exquisite that it creates an irony against the cruelty.

Second, Jean-Paul Belmondo, who is Valjean and the twentieth-century Henri Fortin. What a power he is—he would be even if he were new to us. But like many aging film stars, he brings with him all the years we have spent with him, all the films of his we have seen, and these enrich what he does now. He is now 62, and, in every warm and fruitful way, he looks it.

Good performances abound. Lelouch has summoned other old-timers to his cast. Micheline Presle plays a Mother Superior with heaven in her face. Jean Marais, one of the most beautiful of young men when he was in Cocteau's films, is now one of the most beautiful of old men as the bishop whose candlesticks figure in Hugo's best-known episode.

Michel Boujenah, as a Jewish lawyer harassed by Germans in this century, brings tacit depth to his role. The farm couple who give him refuge, Annie Girardot and Philippe Léotard, are excellent, especially Léotard, as his venality overcomes his charity.

Lelouch's profligacy is sometimes silly. To welcome the advancing Allied armies, Presle has a long line of girls in her convent school play, on about twenty pianos, "It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary." Wouldn't ten pianos have been enough of too much? The crimes and solutions toward the end are incredible, and the neatness of the very ending, complete with a Fred Astaire song, cheats us, by its absurdity, of the tears we would like to have shed. Still, in this three-hour ragout, there are a lot of savory chunks. •

How to think, and not to think, about growing old.

The Age of Anxiety

By Alan Wolfe

I.

Being old in a young country was never easy. Nineteenth-century America—forward-looking, pressed for time, anxious for efficiency, proudly mobile—had little patience with the frail. Homage may have been paid to their wisdom, but contempt defined their treatment. The old, as Thomas Cole reminds us in his cultural history of aging in America, constituted an implicit rebuke to Victorian morality. Albert Barnes, a New School Presbyterian, said it best: "One task alone remained for the old man: to tread his solitary way, already more than half forgotten, to the grave. He has had his day, and the world has nothing more to give him or to hope from him."

Such harsh images of sinful decay came to be moderated by a Romantic view of aging, in which, as Cole writes, "death was fast becoming a kindly nurse who put old people to bed when their life's work was done." Closely linked to ideals about personal hygiene, the active life and good character, such visions of innocent senescence and sweet death may have sounded pleasant, but they were, if anything, even more contemptuous of the elderly than the Revivalist messages that they replaced. For the romance of aging implied that the old, like everyone else in a market society, were responsible for their fate. And as the idea percolated through society that good health and long life were available to all, their approaching death

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seemed that much more an offense to the living.

Aging is one biological process which is unquestionably "socially constructed." Cole's fascinating journey through sermons, self-help manuals, paintings, autobiographies and other cultural artifacts reveals a society never able to make up its mind about the elderly. We have created, Cole argues, a "psychologically primitive" dichotomy of good and bad aging, shifting back and forth from its horrors to its promises. He is right to emphasize the dichotomy, though it is also true that no society has ever quite figured out what to do with people who are dependent and experienced at the same time.

If Americans in the last century worried about being old in a young society, today we fear being young in an old one. Preoccupied with economic stagnation, environmental damage and the costs of Social Security, we could learn about the reality of limits from the inevitability of death. Instead, denying what is most obvious about the elderly—their physical decline and their need for others—we praise them for being just like everyone else or we condemn them for their greed. A spate of recent books foreshadows a new round of elderly-bashing disguised as an admiration of aging. In these books, we do not hear the Revivalist message that the old are a useless drain on the energies of the young. The contemporary attack takes the Romantic form, insisting that the elderly are just like everyone else, and maybe they are better.

With friends such as these writers, the old have no need of enemies. The new mood was first sniffed by Betty Friedan, whose book *The Fountain of Age*, which appeared in 1993, found many of the nation's elderly living vibrant, creative lives, in jolly indifference to biological and gerontological wisdom about the inevitability of their decline. Exposing our collective "denial" of aging, Friedan denounced the American obsession with youth and beauty and praised the search of the elderly for lives of dignity. Guided through the issues by Robert Butler, the former director of the National Institute of Aging and the man who introduced "ageism" into our language, Friedan concluded that the elderly had every right to retain their "autonomy, independence, and real opportunity to continue to participate fully in life." For her, this meant not only defending and expanding all aspects of the welfare state which seek to help the old, but also calling for the recognition from the rest of us that aging can be as much about adventure and discovery as about death and decline.

But nobody has more ebulliently taken up the task of dooming the elderly with excessive praise than Gail Sheehy. "Surprise!" she gushes, "The second half of life is *not* the stagnant, depressing downward slide we have always assumed it to be." Those unhappy 40-year-olds who confessed their despair of midlife have turned into productive, energetic 60-year-olds. A revolution in the life-cycle has created something that no generation has ever before experienced: a second adulthood. Just when we think that we are being put out to pasture, we discover the real person buried inside us. What lies ahead is not Alzheimer's or poverty or fear, but a passage to the age of integrity, after which we can experience the Serene Sixties, the Sage Seventies, the Uninhibited Eighties, the Nobility of the Nineties and even the Celebratory Centenarians.

Aging and Old Age
by Richard A. Posner
(University of Chicago Press, 382 pp., $29.95, to be published in December)

On Aging: Revolt and Resignation
by Jean Améry
translated by John D. Barlow
(Indiana University Press, 132 pp., $19.95)

The Journey of Life: A Cultural History of Aging in America
by Thomas R. Cole
(Cambridge University Press, 295 pp., $14.95)

New Passages: Mapping Your Life Across Time
by Gail Sheehy
(Random House, 498 pp., $25)

Men and women enjoy their second adulthood in different ways, according to Sheehy, but both are wonderful because each becomes more like the other. Men, the silent gender, learn how to talk. They express their emotions. Reflecting back on their careers, they begin to live by what is right, not by what others expect. War-like politicians become peacemakers. Hard-nosed businessmen melt into pussycats. Men in their 60s rekindle old romances or imitate Clint Eastwood and have late babies. Their impotence disappears. They can even recover from cancer spontaneously when given up for lost.

But none of this is as impressive as the second adulthood of women. Women in their 60s and 70s lived before the feminist revolution, but now they are its biggest beneficiaries. They start new careers. They become the strong partner. Released from the only man they ever slept with, they seduce a series of (mostly younger) men and learn the joys of uninhibited sexual pleasure. They are, Sheehy writes, the wisewomen. "I have thirty years of total freedom *ahead* of me now, to make all sorts of choices," a women named Elise tells Sheehy. "The idea of putting limits on myself, when for the first time I'm without limits, is abhorrent to me." "Let's don't even call it aging anymore," Sheehy exclaims. "The very word carries pejorative baggage. Let's refer to successful aging as *saging*—the process by which men and women accumulate wisdom and grow into the culture's sages."

The peculiar thing is that Sheehy says all these things as if she thinks that she is doing the elderly a favor. Her naïveté, if that is what it is, is astounding. Growing old is hard enough. To grow old feeling that you are not one of the beautiful people would be devastating. "Will your personal life story in Second Adulthood be conceived as a progress story or a decline story? To a large degree, *you* have the power of mind to make that choice." Sheehy seems unaware that, if you have the choice, you pay the price. For nobody needs to take care of the elderly if they are taking care of themselves. By imagining the elderly as independent, Sheehy undercuts the case for interdependence. What happens when the elderly discover that their sense of mastery was an illusion, that they need the support and the love of those they spurned in their quest to make themselves over? A younger generation wanting to renounce its obligations to its parents could devise no better strategy than to picture them as leading lives of bliss. Armed with her book, they need never again think their elders in need of their support.

Liberalism has not handled well the less than self-reliant. But rarely was this a problem, at least for too long. The young, after all, would reach maturity; all we had to do was wait. And the old, at least in the days when liberalism was young, would die off before their dependency became a cause for concern. But now our political system is caught between the fears of the young and the needs of the old. As the desire of the one to expand government weakens, the reliance of the other on government expands. This clash between generational interests is the most serious social collision that we face. (The controversy over Medicare is just the beginning.) No one knows how to avoid it. One thing that will increase the damage, however, is a gospel of selfishness. And calling it a gospel of self-discovery doesn't change a thing.

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II.

Which brings us to Richard Posner, a federal judge, who is the most prolific social scientist of our time and well on his way to becoming one of the most influential. For Posner, selfishness, or at least self-interest, is the key to everything. He tries to reduce all behavior to economic calculation while expanding economic calculation to include all behavior. The members of the Chicago "school" of law and economics, with which Posner has long been associated, do this to shatter our notion that the market always makes things worse. In his new book, Posner argues that this holds true for aging, too. Not only can an economic perspective shed light on how people act as they grow older, it also refutes "the Chicken Littles of this world," who believe that the gradual aging of the American population is a serious public policy problem, that the elderly have become dependent on the young, or that Social Security faces a crisis.

If we take an economic approach to aging, we would conclude that the elderly ought to be treated like everyone else because they are rational beings, and so they are like everyone else. Posner's social science thus points in the same direction as Sheehy's stories of personal fulfillment. If the world operated the way Posner thinks it should, there would be no need to develop strong accounts of our obligations to those who depend on us. Such an account would be unnecessary for two reasons: we have no such obligations, and there is no such dependence. We ought to pay some attention, therefore, to Posner's arguments. If they turn out to be valid, the problem of how to treat the aging will have been solved.

Posner's book tackles everything you wanted to know about getting older but were afraid to ask. Economic analysis, he claims, can help us to understand behavioral correlates of aging, such as why the crime rate goes down as age goes up. It can teach us why we respect age among leaders but not among mathematicians or physicists. It counsels against damning the old for their selfishness. It can help us understand the costs and the benefits of tenure without mandatory retirement. And it tells us whether or not we should abolish laws against age discrimination. (We should.)

Economic theory can do all these things, in Posner's view, only if the traditional tools, especially "human capital theory," are modified to take account of the discounted time horizon that aging implies. Human capital theory is the notion that just as we invest in plant and equipment, we invest in human capacities. Education and job experience are two economic decisions in which individuals or firms spend now to receive later. In a simple human capital model, calculations of costs and benefits are independent of the age of the calculator. But this, Posner argues, is clearly wrong. If we have to decide whether attending medical school will return appropriate benefits later, the "later" will be influenced by how old we are when we make the calculation. Very few 60-year-olds think about going to medical school; and this is not only because the expected future benefits are lower. The present costs are also higher, for young people usually learn new things more easily than old people do. That's why the elderly are usually nostalgic for the past; they incur far too many costs in trying to keep up with their new reality.

Posner adds two wrinkles to human capital theory to make it relevant to problems of aging. The first involves the "last-period" problem, a term strikingly reminiscent of "The Fixed Period," William Osler's 1905 valedictory address to the Johns Hopkins Medical School, which rued a situation of "professors growing old at the same time." In economic theory, people behave in a certain way because they assume that such behavior will improve their prospects. But suppose they have no prospects. It would be wrong to conclude, Posner argues, that just because there is no future, there is also no strategic calculation. This is because of what Posner calls "posthumous utility." Why does a dying academic struggle to her last breath to finish a book? Because we care about our reputation after we die, which means that we are willing to burden ourselves with costs now for utilities that will be realized by posterity. Rationality outlives us.

The second concept that Posner explores at some length is the notion of "multiple selves." It is widely known that 25-year-olds will resist being taxed to support 75-year-olds in their retirement. But what if the 75-year-old to be supported is the 25-year-old fifty years from now? Well, it turns out, the reluctance is still there. We simply do not act in a way that is rational for our future selves if it seems irrational to our present selves. And this anomaly can be explained by rational choice theory, so long as it applies to two selves, not one. Why should we assume, Posner asks, that "a person is a single economic decision-maker throughout his lifetime"? After all, "aging brings about such large changes in the individual that there may well come a point at which it is more illuminating to think of two or more persons 'time-sharing' the same identity than of one person having different preferences, let alone one person having the same preferences over the entire life cycle."

Posner introduces these wrinkles on economic theory because he believes that they help us understand the world and serve as grounding points for normative debate. I do not find his normative arguments persuasive, as one example may demonstrate. Free-market advocates of strict persuasion do not like Social Security, for it substitutes the paternalistic judgment of the state for individual choice. If a young person is so short-sighted that he won't save for his retirement, they claim, he deserves the penury he will face in old age. This view is too harsh, even for Posner. Instead he suggests that if we think of the person as having a young self and an old self, "a compulsory pension system, like a prohibition against enforceable contracts of assisted suicide, imposes a limited fiduciary duty on the young self." In this way, "the multiple-selves argument for compulsory Social Security, unlike the paternalistic argument, does not depend on any notion that people are ignorant or that government knows best."

The problem, as any strict advocate of laissez-faire would agree, is that in any system of social security, government *is* making a judgment that the young need to be protected against their hedonism. Posner may find that the concept of multiple selves enables him to justify Social Security to himself, but most writers have been content with other reasons. Governments tax the young to support them in their future because we know from experience that without such programs, the end period of life, already difficult enough, can become unbearable. There is something called human dignity. For nearly everyone except rational choice theorists, securing dignity in old age is sufficient justification for a program of social security, even if a certain paternalism has to be tolerated to achieve it.

So unhelpful are the normative features of "multiple selves" that Posner himself abandons the concept. He is aware, for one thing, that the concept would wreak havoc in criminal law. As the Menendez brothers might have said, we did not kill our parents, our other selves did. The whole concept borders on the notion of multiple personalities, the clinical diagnosis often alleged to be found among those who consider themselves victims of satanic

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ritual abuse. And if the notion is problematic for criminal law, think of what it would do to constitutional law. Rights inhere, after all, in persons. So which person's rights ought to be upheld: the free speech right of the self which seeks pornographic pleasure, or the right of the self which, ashamed at what its other self is doing, seeks to censor pornography? Is mandatory testing for AIDS justified because the self which wants to know is more important than the self which does not want to know? Is the fetus a separate self or a multiple of the mother in whose womb it grows? Some people believe that we have too many rights already; giving us more selves expands even a constant number of rights to infinity. (Once the concept of multiple selves is introduced, the prospects for judges are endless.)

If Posner's concepts are not very helpful in normative argument, perhaps they can serve more strictly social scientific purposes, such as clarifying theoretical issues or helping to predict human behavior. A moment's reflection, however, ought to indicate that neither the concept of posthumous utility nor the notion of multiple selves can be of much explanatory use, at least empirically. How can one determine what our posthumous benefits are (or were) or which of our selves is making which economic decision? Posner's concepts border on the occult, as if the economist wants to understand the self-interest of the soul. (He is not claiming, or at least I hope he is not claiming, that we actually expect to complete our posthumous transactions or that each of our selves has a physical existence and behaves in quantifiable ways.)

Clearly Posner introduces concepts such as these for reasons other than description and prediction. They are meant to be heuristic devices—fictions that enable us to explain aspects of reality which would otherwise be obscure. Posner likes mind puzzles. He approaches theory playfully, as if the role of the social scientist is to take an idea and stretch it this way or that to see if it sheds new light on old issues. But as much fun as it may be to watch Posner engaged in his stretching exercises, there is about them a deep sense of futility. For rational choice theory to work, all people, young and old, have to be motivated by the same incentives. But if the young and the old are as different as the notions of posthumous utility and multiple selves suggest, why insist on a unified theory capable of subsuming their divergent behaviors?

Posner is fully aware that the elderly are different. "Anyone who doubts that there are palpable, substantial, systematic, measurable, demoralizing, and in the present state of biological and medical knowledge inevitable declines in physical and mental functioning even for the 'normal' or 'healthy' aged in this the world's most medically pampered society ... is out of touch with reality," he writes. But he then insists that the significance of age-related characteristics can be exaggerated and argues that "there is scope for rational debate over when decline sets in." Since the elderly are both like and not like the young, the social scientist must decide whether those differences are so small that a unified theory of human behavior can still be salvaged or so large that such a theory would have to be rejected. Posner's bizarre notion of individuals "time-sharing" the same body may save his theory, but it does nothing to advance our understanding of reality.

III.

If rational choice theory, even when modified, makes accurate predictions about human behavior, then Posner is right to rely upon it. Certainly Posner thinks it does make such predictions; his book is filled with empirical claims. Let me illustrate one of them by following his reasoning through the question of whether the elderly ought to be allowed, with the help of a physician, to take their own lives.

An argument against the idea of physician-assisted suicide is that by making suicide easier, we make it more acceptable. This can even be expressed in economic terms: lower costs for suicide will increase demand. But, Posner argues in typically counter-intuitive fashion, "cheaper suicide may result in less suicide." Terminal illness is awful, but the urgent question is not whether the utility of living is negative, but whether it is negative (or positive) compared to something else. There are two alternatives. One would be a regime in which physician-assisted suicide was illegal, the other one in which it is permitted.

In the former case, an individual facing pain, suffering and eventual death can proceed to suicide. "He will experience neither positive nor expected utility from living," Posner writes, "because he will be dead, but he will incur the cost of getting from the state of being alive to the state of being dead." If, on the other hand, he postpones his suicide, he avoids those costs, but he cannot be certain about the utility of staying alive. He will therefore commit suicide "if the expected utility of death now, which is to say the disutility averted by death now, exceeds the expected utility of life plus the cost of suicide."

Next assume that the same individual can commit suicide now or commit it later, given constant cost, with the help of a physician. As the individual waits, the unknown aspects of the expected utility of life begin to become clearer. A new drug may be discovered (or not discovered); the pain may be found to be as real (or less real) than anticipated; the dignity of being terminally ill may be found to be greater or smaller than imagined; and so on. By committing suicide now, an individual forecloses the information that would become available if he waited. Not all of that information would result in a decision to avoid suicide, for some of the information could be worse than expected. But some of the information will also be better. It follows that introducing physician-assisted suicide will reduce the number of suicides by the number of people who are mistaken about expecting the worst from their terminal condition. Thus, those who believe that making suicide "easier" will increase its frequency are simply wrong.

Posner's reasoning—presented with numerous algebraic formulae, which in my mercy I have omitted—may strike some as far-fetched. After all, suicidal individuals could still postpone their decision, even if physician-assisted suicide were never introduced. At this point we are better off leaving theory behind and turning to actual data. As soon as the possibility of such a reality test is posed, however, Posner's analysis enters into a strange world in which the simple testing of a hypothesis never resolves anything. Oregon is the first American state to have authorized physician-assisted suicide, but its law has been delayed by legal challenges and has not yet gone into effect. No evidence there. Posner then demonstrates that states with lower per capita income and lower percentages of minorities have higher suicide rates. This is an interesting finding, but it is not relevant to his main point. Moreover, the finding itself could be "spurious": poor states, often more religious, may have taboos against classifying suicides as suicides; states with high minority populations may witness more members of minority groups dying before suicide becomes an option.

There is one variable that might shed some light on the question that interests Posner. While physician-assisted suicide is not given official approval in any American state except Oregon, it is defined as criminal behavior in some states and not in others. Posner shows

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that states which criminalize physician-assisted suicide have higher suicide rates than those which do not, although the relationship is not statistically significant. Yet even this weak relationship has to be qualified. First, the number of cases—fifty—is small. Second, Posner does not repeat the test over a number of years but confines himself to 1991. Third, his procedure compares a rate, which can vary from 0 to 100 percent, with a binary state: either there is a law criminalizing the behavior (in which case Posner assigns a value of 1) or there is not (in which case it is classified as 0). This is an acceptable statistical procedure, but it is not one that inspires confidence, since one of the axes in the relationship conveys an uncomfortable similarity to coin flipping. Fourth, as Posner recognizes, states which do criminalize physician-assisted suicide rarely enforce the law. If the law is on the books but is generally ignored, we cannot say much about the actual practice of physician-assisted suicide. These are the kinds of statistical relationships that belong in the wastebasket, not the text.

And if these were not problems enough, the evidence from the one place in the world where such an experiment has been tried is even more ambiguous. It turns out that there has been a dramatic drop in suicides in Holland after the legalization of euthanasia. Deaths attributed to euthanasia, however, are not counted as suicides in Holland, and so even Posner concedes that the Dutch data are useless for his purpose. But the always curious Posner should have noticed something else from this example. Sociologists have long argued that suicide rates measure not the behavior of those who take their lives, but the behavior of the coroners who decide which deaths constitute a suicide and which do not. Like crime rates, suicide rates tell us more about the culture in which individuals live than about how individuals behave.

If there is no proof either way, we ought to reject the hypothesis that physician-assisted suicide would bring down the number of suicides. This is the one thing that Posner will not do. Here is one summary of his findings: "the fear that ... physicians will hustle their patients to a premature and undesired death seems greatly exaggerated; indeed, the suicide rate might actually fall if physician-assisted suicide were permitted in the subset of cases that I have described." This is a rather outrageous statement. Posner has never demonstrated that potentially suicidal people, including the elderly, think about life and death as rational calculators. Yet he is prepared to advocate that doctors be permitted to help people take their own lives, fully confident that the world will be a better place if they do. I do not know where his confidence comes from. It certainly does not come from any data in his book.

Aging and Old Age promises a radically new approach, one which cautions against exaggerating any problem that we might identify with increased longevity. Still, without a strong normative, conceptual or empirical base for his arguments, can we trust Posner's recommendations? It turns out that not even he can. Posner himself gives credence to the "Chicken Littles" who worry about these things. The elderly, he points out, have more time on their hands, so the costs of investing in politics is lower for them, giving them disproportionate political power. They form a natural alliance with the near-elderly. The first generation under Social Security received a windfall—retirement benefits for which they did not pay taxes—an anomaly that, by Posner's estimate, did not fully disappear until those born in 1960 came into the world. All Posner can offer against all this is the notion that the

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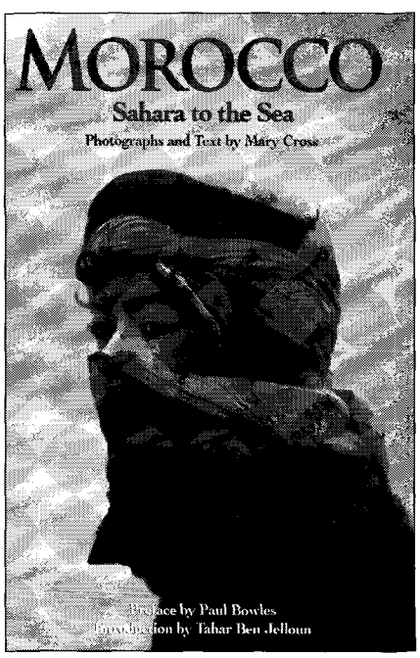

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PREFACE BY PAUL BOWLES

"Mary Cross has the eye of a poet and the soul of an explorer. She has unlocked the secrets of a vast mysterious land and presented them to us in a series of brilliant images. Morocco is unforgettable and so is this book."
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"Mary Cross' photographs capture, as words cannot, what is perhaps the most important truth about Morocco: it is a place in which striking physical settings and emphatic individuals are set off against one another in an exact and loving tension. Ms. Cross not only sees this, she has the skill and dedication to her craft, unique in my experience of looking at books of photographs of Morocco, to make us see it. This is a major contribution not just to our 'view' of Morocco, but to our understanding of it."
—Clifford Geertz

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elderly are conservative and do not like to tamper, and that Social Security relieves the private costs of caretaking which the young would have to provide for the old. Thus Posner's conclusion about our current programs for the elderly is anything but counter-intuitive: "it would be reckless to suggest that the programs approach optimality or to deny the possibility that they may involve a large and perhaps unconscionable transfer of wealth from young to old."

Posner has written a deeply flawed book. "I admit that the analysis might be too static," he says of one (too static) analysis. "The empirical results presented in this chapter," he says at another place, "are merely suggestive." His analysis of relations between the generations is "conjectured as well as proven." After suggesting that "a dollar spent on fighting women's diseases is likely to buy more longevity than a dollar spent on fighting men's diseases," Posner says that redirecting medical funds from one gender to the other would require "plugging numbers into the variables in my equations, something I have not attempted to do." Maybe he should have. Posner's appetite is voracious, his inquiries free-ranging, his reading extensive, his courage inspiring. The trouble is that, when he writes about some of the most mysterious and controversial issues we face, there is not necessarily any truth in anything he says.

IV.

"It would be quite inadmissible to reduce the phenomenon of aging and being old ... to a few fundamental problems of social structure and of market and profit economics," wrote Jean Améry in 1968. Améry was an Austrian named Hans Mayer, who escaped to Belgium, became active in the resistance against the Nazis, was captured and sent to Auschwitz, survived, settled in Belgium, scrambled the last letters of his name and published, in 1966, *At the Mind's Limits*. What did "we"—the non-believing intellectuals—lose in Auschwitz, Améry asked. "We lost a good deal of arrogance, of metaphysical conceit, but also quite a bit of our naïve joy in the intellect and what we falsely imagined was the sense of life."

On Aging, published two years after *At the Mind's Limits*, applies to the problem of getting older the same nonsentimental, unadorned sense of realism that would later mark Améry's attempts to get at the truth of the concentration camp. Améry was 55 when he wrote his book, the same age as Posner. "For the aging," Améry wrote, "the autumn of life is the last autumn and therefore not an autumn at all." Time loses its cyclical sense as the person becomes older. Every moment, even those of great joy, counts against us, for it is one more tick off a clock that cannot be reversed. Aging mocks our intellectuality, our sense that we can make rational meaning out of life.

People comfort the aging by telling them that it is a normal condition. But there is no norm to which the aging person returns. One can overcome an illness, but never to the point of the "normality" before one became sick. We are better off treating aging as an incurable disease, Améry writes, recognizing that the enemy against whom we are fighting is going to win. And generally we do this—but not until just before the end. In the meantime there is a transitional state: aging, as opposed to death. In this limbo, we act very much like Posner's multiple selves—alienated from our own aging body, as if we could preserve the ego of the non-aging self even as we watch a tooth here and a heart there deteriorate. We discover our bodies as we begin to lose them, only to realize that we will soon experience their negation. "When we have crossed the top of a mountain and begin to go down the other side and it quickly becomes steeper and steeper, faster and faster, it is no longer our place to think in a way appropriate to the conquest of the world, feeling compelled to demonstrate for ourselves an image of the world in logic." Inevitably, "alienation from oneself becomes alienation from being, no matter how faithfully we still attend to the day...."

We also age in the eyes of others. "All at once we realize that the world no longer concedes us credit for our future, it no longer wants to entertain seeing us in terms of what we *could* be." Rebel as we might, we are as without recourse against social age as we are against physical age. Even if we try to make declarations about the nature of the world, we discover that it no longer belongs to us. The young steal from us our sense that we can say something important. They do not read the books we write; they do not even read the books we read. That may be why the modern conductor Ernst Ansermet can write a diatribe against serialism or Oskar Kokoschka can denounce modern painting. The culture conspires against the aging person, designing roads for which he has no maps. "For him the logical question whether the acceleration should be called progress is not even under discussion." The aging understand a world which no longer exists and the way in which it exists no longer makes sense to them.

All that is left for the aging is to think about death. But this takes no special abilities. The genius and the imbecile, unequal in everything else, are equal in this: neither knows what extinction will be like. It is better to contemplate dying than death, for one takes place in the present and can be understood, while the other has no time, present or future, and is literally unknowable. We cannot ignore our approaching death, and neither can we welcome it. All we can do is to live with a "false compromise," the lies we tell ourselves to get through the moment. "In aging, finally, we have to live with dying, a scandalous imposition, a humiliation without compare, that we put up with, not in humility, but as the humiliated."

Améry, whose book *By One's Own Hand: A Discourse on Voluntary Death* appeared in 1976, put his theory into practice a year later. Shortly before his suicide, he wrote: "Today as much as yesterday I think that society has to undertake everything to relieve old and aging persons of their unpleasant destiny." I, for one, do not share his bleakness, let alone his rationale for euthanasia. His relentlessly unhappy vision of what happens to us as we lose our mental and physical powers is so colored by his experiences with human evil that they are as unreliable a guide to public policy as the cheery optimism of Sheehy or Posner. But if Améry's pessimism disparages life, his humanism reaffirms it. By trying to make sense of our existence, Améry reminds us of why human life is precious. That is why his recognition that there are limits to our capacities is a welcome contribution to the American debate about intergenerational obligations.

That debate has been marked by a reluctance to acknowledge that differences between people are possible without such differences necessarily being invidious. The elderly have been subjected to their own form of "mainstreaming." Just as educators shy away from tracking students by ability or advocate incorporating disturbed students into the regular classroom, we treat the elderly as if there were nothing special about their condition. But there *is* something special about their condition. They are facing death. In the age of AIDS, many young people have the same experience; but not all young people have dying on their minds. All old people do.

At the very least, the way we think about aging ought to be colored by the

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reality of what aging means. Even Posner, so optimistic about so many things, knows that aging is hardly hunky-dory: "I am not a Pollyanna," he insists. "I dread old age as much as the next person. I suggest merely that it may be a more serious personal problem than it is a social, an economic, or a political one." Yet how can a personal problem shared so by so many not be a social problem as well? After all, the next couple of decades will witness—it will be public policy problem number one—the aging of one of the largest birth cohorts this country has even produced. A group of people given to selfish introspection can only become even more narcissistic when persuaded that limits are as unnatural as they are unnecessary. I shudder at the thought of my generation reaching old age, not because there may be little in the till to bail us out, but because we have not done well with good fortune and we are likely to do far worse with bad.

No society in human history has ever had to think about how to support a significant part of its population for three or more decades after they have stopped working. The challenge of this irreversible demographic fact cries out for compassion. "Deliver me from compassion," Betty Friedan thought as she listened to experts discuss the problems faced by the elderly; and there are fewer words more out of favor with the new celebrants of the last years than "gratitude," "caring" and "indebtedness." But a society that forbids the young from expressing their thanks to the old is a cold society. The old created the world in which we were raised; and as much as we might blame them for its imperfections, we are indebted to them for its existence. If they want to work past the age of 65, we ought to recognize the amazingly large number of years they have left and let them do so. They are entitled to a regular income and decent medical care, and it matters not a whit that they have not quite paid their full share, even if they believe that they have. The notion that our obligation to provide future generations a balanced budget overrides our debt to those who suffered through a depression and won a world war is not morally defensible.

It is precisely because we have such strong obligations to the elderly that we must approach them with another thing that is disdained by the new enthusiasts of aging: realism. We must not accept the claim that any acknowledgment of their declining powers is a form of "ageism." (About this I agree with Posner.) There are always new wonders to experience and new capacities to develop, and yet we must discourage the elderly from pursuing an illusory course of self-reliance, a course that is foolhardy even for the young. And we are right to resist their efforts to use their political power to protect their group advantages: a game of playing one generation off against another generation is a game that every generation will lose. For better or worse, the old are as dependent on us for their future as we are dependent on them for their past.

We do not seem to possess the language that is appropriate for the strengthening of interdependence across generations. Gail Sheehy's retreat to the power of positive thinking, Richard Posner's tortuous efforts to deny the reality of dependence (and his surreal use of economics to describe matters of the human heart) and Thomas Cole's suggestion that we are experiencing "the emergence of a postmodern course of life, in which individual needs and abilities are no longer entirely subordinated to chronological boundaries and bureaucratic mechanisms" are all the wrong ways to go. We do not owe our elders a narcissistic reflection of ourselves. We owe them the courage to acknowledge their dependence on us. Only then will we be able, when we are like them, to ask for help. •

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He Lost It At The Movies

By Michael Lewis

A Good Life: Newspapering and Other Adventures by Ben Bradlee

(Simon & Schuster, 514 pp., $27.50)

An English friend of mine once remarked that Americans seem to decide early on what role they should play and then play it for the rest of their lives, as if they were characters in a movie. This is true at least of the American who wrote *A Good Life*. Ben Bradlee's memoir has the appeal of a B-movie, which offers the soothing predictability of its main character in an otherwise unpredictable world. The stock type—the salty, lovable, crusading editor who has a wink for all the girls and a drink for all the boys—remains a stock type regardless of what is going on around or inside him. War and peace, marriage and adultery, friendship and betrayal, truth-seeking and starfucking: he describes all experience in the same tone because the play is merely a backdrop. The actor's the thing.

Benjamin Crowninshield Bradlee was born in Boston in 1921, into an upper-class family in which everyone seems to have been sent to prep school, then to Harvard. Polio ended his career as a schoolboy athlete, indifference ended his career as a scholar. He left Harvard for the Pacific theater in World War II, an experience that largely defined his subsequent outlook: for the rest of his life, whenever his passions ran high, he wrote and spoke in military metaphors. ("The denials were exploding around us like incoming artillery shells.") In 1942 he married for the first time, and noticed immediately that love life was less exciting than war life. He would always feel more strongly toward the men on his various battleships than toward the women in his life. Yet he would remain a vocal and enthusiastic heterosexual through two more marriages and countless one-night stands.

After the war Bradlee went looking for a career. He seems to have preserved into adulthood an adolescent sense of destiny which, naïvely but admirably, he nurtured and made grow. He spent a few years flirting with the Foreign Service, where he discovered that "the cover-your-ass crowd frowned on balls and initiative," and he finally settled on a career in journalism. He was, in rapid succession, a reporter on a New Hampshire newspaper, *Newsweek*'s Paris correspondent, a reporter in *Newsweek*'s Washington bureau, President John F. Kennedy's journalistic confidante, *Newsweek*'s Washington bureau chief, the managing editor of *The Washington Post* and, finally, from 1968 until his retirement in 1991, the *Post*'s executive editor. As editor of the *Post* he would publish the Pentagon Papers and the Watergate journalism that would force Nixon from the White House. Not much worth writing about happened after Watergate, but by the end of his career he had made his name as the finest newspaper editor of his generation.

That is the short version of Bradlee's life as Bradlee tells it, charmingly. The book reads less like a formal memoir than an oral history. Reading it you have the sense that Bradlee is speaking to you, and that he's coming completely clean. At the same time he tells you almost nothing about the twenty years of his life that followed the movie version of *All the President's Men*, sixteen of which he spent running the *Post*. He includes a chapter on the Janet Cooke scandal, but devotes just a page or so to the Carter years, and even less to Reagan and Bush. The result is that at the end of his memoir we have no idea how Bradlee spent most of his career. The reader is left to imagine the salty, lovable, crusading editor going on about his business more or less as Jason Robards did in the movie, and the reader is more or less happy to do this. In Bradlee's high spirits, his sense of fair play, his love of novelty, his low threshold of boredom and his delight in a good story, you can see a born newspaperman at work. What you cannot see, unless you know a bit about Washington journalism, is that Bradlee is different in important ways from the crusading character of his imagination.

There are two kinds of journalism in Washington, and they have so little in common that they should go by different names. One kind of journalism—the crusading journalism glamorized by the movies and the memoirs—is characterized by a willingness to challenge people in power and let the pieces fall where they may. The crusader relies more on his wits than on his friendships with important people. Often as not he is a neurotic character, with poor hygiene, unpleasant mannerisms and no social antennae. Far from agonizing whether to summer in the Hamptons or the Vineyard, he rarely notices the change of seasons. The crusading journalist does not worry whether he is asked to the Grahams or the Harrimans or the Kennedys for dinner. He knows he will never be asked, unless he becomes too famous for them to ignore. Until then, he cannot be trusted with their secrets.

The other kind of journalism—access journalism—is a slow dance between print and power, with the journalist cast in the role of the reluctantly submissive female. The access journalist is forever deciding whether to protest when, during the waltz, the hand lands on his bottom. The trick for the journalist is to keep the powers-that-be interested without acquiring a reputation for loose behavior. Once a journalist is widely believed to be owned by his sources, he (or she) ceases to be valuable even to his sources. Access journalists are dealmakers at heart. They strike deals with their sources, with their employers, with themselves. But they are not without firm principles: loyalty to friends, a belief in keeping secrets, a willingness to give back to the system as much as they have taken out.

Whereas the crusaders noisily argue that the access journalists are corrupt, the access journalists secretly believe that the crusaders are hopelessly out of it. (If you've never dined with Jupiter, how can you describe Olympus?) They are right, to some small extent. And access journalists do serve a useful social function. They recount important events accurately, when it serves the interests of important people to have events so recounted.

There are few pure examples of either type, of course. But most journalists can be classified, like most belly buttons, as outties or innies. The miracle of Ben Bradlee is that he has sold himself to the public as the perfect outtie while he was in many important ways the consummate innie.

Bradlee's wonderful persona, his winning mixture of authenticity and shtick, seems to be the main cause of the confusion. He is known, with reason, as a troublemaker, but *A Good Life* shows that his talent was for a very specific kind of trouble. All the scraps that he lands himself in have the simplicity of myth, with Bradlee cast as a sort of

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comic-book superhero fighting villains on every front. "Asshole" is one of Bradlee's favorite words, and he has a gift for finding the people to whom it applies. No sooner has he sniffed one out than he leaps to drive it back into its cave. He clearly relishes every one of these little victories, no matter how trivial. Here, for instance, is Bradlee's response to a lunatic in Decatur, Illinois, who has written a letter to the *Post* insulting to Katharine Graham: "The president of the bank in Decatur, Illinois, is an old classmate and friend of mine. I think I'll ask him to foreclose on your mortgage." And this, in response to a letter to the *Post* accusing Bradlee of being un-American from J.C. Turnacliffe, P.O. Box 1971, St Paul, Minnesota: "Dear Asshole, I suspect I did more for my country in the war than you did. I spent four years in destroyers in the Pacific Ocean. My theatre ribbon has ten battle stars in it." And this, about his brief encounter with striking *Post* workers:

> All the craft unions honored the pressman's picket line and refused to come to work. Crossing a picket line when your friends are picketing is tough. Crossing this picket line was a pleasure. Sally [Quinn, his third wife], by my side this time as we went to work, drew special, vulgar, and noisy attention, and I managed to control myself only by putting my right hand in my pants pocket—except for a conspicuous middle finger.

How can you not like a guy who is willing to drop his job editing a national newspaper to call yet another lunatic who writes letters to the editor an asshole? This is Bradlee at his most typical and adorable. There are dozens of stories in this book that ring the same adolescent, pugilistic tone. The world as Bradlee finds it breaks down not into people with power, who need to be watched at all times, and people without power, whose interests need to be guarded; but into people of unassailable virtue who are on your side (Edward Bennett Williams, the Graham family, JFK) and assholes who are not. Putting down this book you can't help but feel fortunate that, in addition to everything else, Nixon fell in squarely with the assholes. ("I never got behind that stagy, programmed exterior to anything like an inner man that I could understand or laugh with," Bradlee writes.) Bradlee is drawn again and again to stories in which there are good guys and bad guys. He tells them so well because he, obviously, is the good guy.

This is all part of the good life, of course. My point is only that this comic-book worldview is less heroic in journalism than it is in war. Most of the time the boys'-club view of the world actually serves the interests of people in power. Watergate was the remarkable exception. The rule was the morally more ambiguous system of back-scratching and influence peddling that came to define Washington during Bradlee's tenure at the *Post*. There were a lot of people in Washington worthy of Bradlee's scrutiny, such as Edward Bennett Williams and Clark Clifford, but most of them weren't assholes. Most of them were Bradlee's friends.

To put it differently: the moment the story ceases to be black and white and turns shades of gray, Bradlee gets uncomfortable. Hence we are greeted here with the astonishing sight of the managing editor of *The Washington Post* avoiding the Vietnam debate. "I concentrated on trying to discover what was going on in Vietnam," said Bradlee, "on trying to determine who was telling the truth about Vietnam, before it occurred to me to find out where I stood myself ... at that time the op-ed page came under the jurisdiction of the managing editor, and at least theoretically that gave me a chance to run columns by writers who expressed my own views. *But my own views were essentially non-political.*" (The italics are mine.) This kind of political abstention may seem like the soul of a newspaperman's objectivity. But it is also, in itself, a political opinion, especially in a man who controls an op-ed page. That opinion is: whatever the people who are calling the shots say is right. This, needless to say, is likely to lead to more dinner party invitations from the people who are calling the shots.

Bradlee seems never to have reconciled his desire to hang around with powerful and famous people with his desire to get to the bottom of things. At the beginning of his career he clubbed around with fellow journalists, but he soon moved on to Washington fixers and politicians, and finally he ended up with Hollywood luminaries. ("One of the new friends Sally quickly added to my life was Norman Lear ... the more you see him and talk to him, the more you want to see him and talk to him. And hug him. My friend Norman is an All-Pro hugger.") In his defense, Bradlee's relentless celebrity-chasing and name-dropping is about as inoffensive as it can be. But it is perfectly inconsistent with remaining dangerous to established interests. Indeed, one way to view Bradlee's career is as an answer to the question: How dangerously honest can you be and still remain cozy with the in-crowd?

The best example of his confusion was Kennedy, about whom he seems to have been more than characteristically naïve. Compare this from Bradlee's 1975 memoir, *Conversations with Kennedy*:

> We had once again [become] part of the "in" crowd—we kept telling ourselves—that got asked to come after dinner at the White House.... The females imported from New York for the occasion had been spectacular again, and at one point Kennedy had pulled me aside to comment "If you and I could only run wild Benjy."

To this passage from *A Good Life*:

> Thirty years after his death, and after hundreds and hundreds of revelations, and scores of assessments and appreciations, new material has convinced me that Kennedy screwed around. A lot.

One feels that Bradlee was compromised not by his friendship with Kennedy but by that aspect of his character that led him to lust for Kennedy's (and other power brokers') friendship. He sees that he has cut a deal, and that he's being let in for keeping mum. What he can't quite grasp is how valuable it is for Kennedy to have a leading Washington journalist as a character witness. The problem here—from the point of view of the outtie—was not that Bradlee hung around with Kennedy, but that he was rightly identified by Kennedy as someone with whom it was perfectly safe to hang around.

If nothing else, *A Good Life* teaches us something about journalistic courage, to wit, that journalistic courage is not as simple as battlefield courage. It is telling that the most famously brave editor of his generation feels safer hopping in a chopper and taking a few rounds of enemy fire than he does taking a stand on the war. Journalism that seems conspicuously brave usually is not. When the whole world is praising you for your bravery, your circulation is shooting through the roof and everyone who matters to you socially and financially approves of what you are writing, you may be on to something, but you are not brave.

The *Post*'s Watergate coverage, of course, was conspicuously brave; and Bradlee's version of the story replicates the movie version, complete with veiled death threats and incoming artillery shells. But as the shells are exploding, the awards, the women and the praise seem to be piling up down in the trenches. "Mr. Bradlee," Clark Clifford (the voice of permanent Washington) cooed into the phone one day in the middle of Watergate, "I would like to tell you something. I woke up this morning, put on my bathrobe and my slippers, went downstairs slowly, opened the front door carefully, and there it

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was. And I looked up to the heavens, and said, 'Thank God for *The Washington Post*.' "

Access journalists tend to have a fairly conventional and self-serving notion about bravery in journalism, for the very good reason that it makes it easier for them to avoid serious combat duty. Often the bravest journalism does not expose crime or grotesque abuse at the top, but more subtle abuses among people who might directly affect the journalist's interests. Bradlee's friend Edward Bennett Williams described the business of way-laying presidents far more succinctly than Bradlee ever does. "I've been in this city for thirty years and for thirty years I've watched respectable and responsible journalists tell the Congress and the executive branch to go fuck themselves," he told Bradlee when Bradlee consulted him about publishing the Pentagon Papers, according to Evan Thomas's biography of him. "What's Nixon going to do? Put every major editor and publisher in jail? Nixon doesn't have the balls to go after you."

There's something a little sad about Bradlee's book, but it is so relentlessly upbeat that it took me a while to put my finger on the source of the sadness. *A Good Life* is a portrait of a vanishing world—the world of the old-fashioned innie. Watergate showed that there was a kind of journalistic arbitrage in attacking a sitting president. (Shrewd access journalists have exploited the arbitrage ever since.) But the *Post*'s coverage of the event, and the movie about it, dealt Bradlee's world a serious blow. His friendship with Kennedy, for instance, was a more ambiguous professional asset after Watergate than it was before. The world had changed in some way that made an outlook upon it that once seemed noble and true seem more than a little compromised.

Bradlee has no interest in writing about that world. Perhaps this is why. Even as the man's celebrity rose, his persona was in retreat. It is interesting to compare how Bradlee wrote about Kennedy in 1975 with how he copied it out in 1995. In the earlier book, Bradlee describes waiting in Washington with the Kennedys for the results of the West Virginia vote:

> We walked catty-corner across New York Avenue and Fourteenth Street to the Plaza Theater, which then as now specialized in porn. This wasn't the hard-core porn of the seventies, just a nasty little thing called *Private Property*, starring one Katie Manx as a horny housewife who kept getting raped and seduced by hoodlums. We wondered aloud if the movie was on the Catholic Index of forbidden films (it was), and whether or not there were any votes in it either way for Kennedy in allegedly anti-Catholic West Virginia.... Kennedy's concentration was absolute zero, as he left every twenty minutes to call Bobby in West Virginia. Each time he returned he'd whisper "Nothing definite yet," slouch back into his seat and flick his teeth with the fingernail of the middle finger of his right hand, until he left to call again.

And here is how Bradlee edited his copy twenty years later:

> So we went across 14th Street to the Plaza Theater, which then specialized in porn films. Not the hard-core stuff of later years, but a nasty thing called *Private Property*, starring one Katie Manx as a horny housewife. (For the record, I later found out that *Private Property* was on the Catholic Index of forbidden films. I never reported anything about that particular night at the movies.)

This passage is more heavily rewritten than most of his chapters on Kennedy, which mainly are just copied into *A Good Life* from *Conversations with Kennedy*. What has happened to strip the event of its detail? Why the nips and the tucks that take the life out of the scene? What intervened, in America, between 1975 and 1995? Two things, really. A scruple about women's sensibilities, which was never one of Bradlee's distinguishing features; and a scruple about journalism's proximity to power, the whole field of journalistic ethics, which now prefers its tortured reasonings to a Bradlee-like "fuck off."

Bradlee is a born storyteller, and so his book is a pleasure to read. But the world is stealing the man's material from him. He still wants to be liked, but he has only these stories, and they are not as entertaining as they used to be. As he retells his favorite war stories for the last time, he is forced to wonder who might be listening and what they might be thinking. Thus do even bloodless revolutions devour their children. •

Very Pale Fire

BY EDMUND WHITE

The Stories of Vladimir Nabokov edited by Dmitri Nabokov

(Knopf, 655 pp., $35)

There was always something of the whiz kid about Nabokov, and nowhere is this characteristic more obvious than in his short stories. They were written from the early 1920s until the middle 1950s, when *Lolita* liberated him from a form he must have known did not show him at his best. At their worst, Nabokov's stories are built around a twist worthy of O. Henry. In "Revenge," a mad professor, jealous on the slimmest (and as it turns out, misleading) evidence, kills his wife by putting her to bed with the "hastily cobbled skeleton of a hunchback" that he "had acquired abroad for the university museum." Those are the last words in the story—how nifty! "A Matter of Chance" tells of a couple of Russian emigrants, separated for years, whose reunion is thwarted by two cruel accidents; we don't feel much for the couple, not even when the husband commits suicide out of his desperate loneliness, but we do rub our palms together at the swell plot—if, that is, we happen to be science nerds, chess champions or *idiots savants* who may be *savant* about fate's dirty tricks but idiotic in what might appeal to an adult mind. In "*La Veneziana*," Nabokov toys with the notion of entering a painting, and along the way treats us to the perennially avant-garde reminder that art is not life but only artifice: the night watchman "traverses this narrative and rapidly vanishes into the misty domains whence he was evoked by a whim of the pen." Neat.

The fun continues. In "The Admiralty Spire," an irate man writes an author a letter that foreshadows Kinbote's raving in *Pale Fire*. He accuses the author of having stolen and leached of all color his own radiant love story, but when he begins to cite chapter and verse we see that the allegedly plagiarized scenes are nothing but the commonplaces of *eau-de-rose* novelettes, redeemed if at all by the freshness of sensuous detail in the letter-writer's memories. This is an idea for a story that started out, no doubt, as an "idea for a story," and it stays in the reader's memory in just that schematic form. And the story called "The Vane Sisters" ends with an acrostic. The first letters of all the words in the last para-

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graph spell out a rather uncrucial message to the alert, or alerted, reader. When *The New Yorker*'s fiction editor Katherine White rejected the story in 1951, Nabokov wrote her a protest, explaining the device. As Michael Wood recounts in his sensitively analytical new book, *The Magician's Doubts: Nabokov and the Risks of Fiction*, White replied that they'd certainly missed the acrostic, "that being rather out of *The New Yorker*'s line." It is exterior, I might add, to most serious readers' tastes, too.

Details, of course, are at the heart of Nabokov's fiction. If he often relies on clumsy, too-paraphrasable and punchy plots, he does so because they function as the strong frame on which are cantilevered notations of color, sound, smell and touch, notations that are evocative but often static, especially when dwelled on at great length. In the earliest stories, we see his love of shimmering detail in its purest, least narrative form. In the appropriately titled "Sounds," an early love affair in Russia is brushed in, but it is scarcely visible against the indelible colors of what would ordinarily be called the background. This strange reversal of figure and ground is justified by a pantheistic pronouncement: "I realized that you had no power over me, that it was not you alone who were my lover but the entire earth."

This first sounding of the Nabokovian credo—the love of the world's detail—is echoed explicitly again and again in these stories, and implicitly it shapes Nabokov's artistic decisions sentence by sentence. In "A Guide to Berlin," he puts this taste into a long perspective of time and nostalgia:

> I think that here lies the sense of literary creation: to portray ordinary objects as they will be reflected in the kindly mirrors of future times; to find in the objects around us the fragrant tenderness that only posterity will discern and appreciate in the far-off times when every trifle of our plain everyday life will become exquisite and festive in its own right: the times when a man who might put on the most ordinary jacket of today will be dressed up for an elegant masquerade.

Nabokov wrote of "A Guide to Berlin" that "despite its simple appearance" it is "one of my trickiest pieces." Wow. I love tricks.

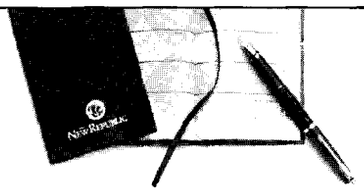
One could almost say that Nabokov's art at its best thrives on hallucinatory evocations, that the only subjects that provide his work with the necessary intensity are childhood memories, love, certain exquisite experiences of nature and a few privileged moments of making or enjoying art. Exile rendered childhood places and people permanently unavailable to him, hence haloed. But in the stories, most of them written in Berlin, where he lived throughout the 1920s until the mid-1930s and wrote under the name "Vladimir Sirin" for émigré Russian periodicals, all Nabokov had to play against the perfection of lost Russia was the insufferable porkiness of the Germans—not quite the stuff of epiphany.

In "Cloud, Castle, Lake," for instance, a melancholy Russian wins a pleasure trip at a charity ball and is forced to go to the country with a terrifying band of German merrymakers, led by a blond giant "burned the color of a cockscomb" who had "huge brick-red knees with golden hairs" while his nose "looked lacquered." Everyone is forced to sing from sheet music handed out by the Bureau ("Stop that worrying and moping,/ Take a knotted stick and rise, /Come a-tramping in the open/ With the good, the hearty guys!"). In *Lolita*, by contrast, Nabokov is not appealing to a small band of impoverished and nearly extinct Russian exiles, as he was in his stories, but clowning in English before a potentially vast public of Americans who were at once confident enough politically and materially and yet sufficiently insecure culturally to shudder with pleasure at the pointed remarks of Humbert Humbert, a French-speaking Swiss intellectual (and a scoundrel, a criminal and a madman).

Through Humbert's eyes American readers see their own country from an odd, often uncomprehending, certainly satirical perspective. This defamiliarization (and the occasional shared sympathy between Nabokov and the reader at Humbert's expense) lend the descriptions of American folkways a *joie de vivre* absent from the earlier novels and stories. As the envoy of a superior if vanished Russia addressing a more naïve but robustly present America, Nabokov is in much better form than when he's complaining about Germany to fellow Russian émigrés.

Nabokov once observed that Freud got it wrong: we don't love a woman's silken hair because we are attracted to her sexually, we are attracted to her sexually because we wish to be connected somehow to her silken hair. In the same way, we could say that in his stories Nabokov doesn't invent details in order to realize a plot (as Aristotle proposed in the *Poetics*); the heavy-handed action in his writing is there to provide an occasion for the poetry.

When the details work properly, they're so light that they lift those heavy



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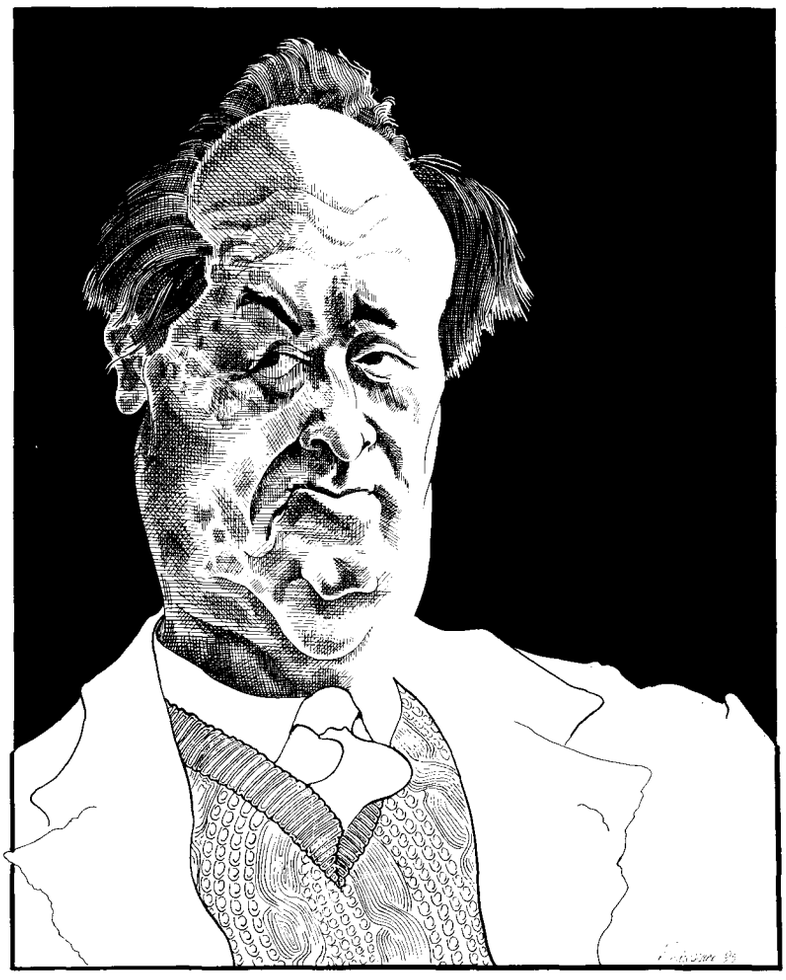
hands. Consider the conclusion of "Perfection," in which an ill and absent-minded Russian tutor travels with his athletic young charge to a seaside resort. The boy runs into the surf and pretends to drown. The tutor stumbles after him, has a heart attack and dies. This is the last paragraph:

> The dull mist immediately broke, blossomed with marvelous colors, all kinds of sounds burst forth—the rote of the sea, the clapping of the wind, human cries—and there was David standing, up to his ankles in bright water, not knowing what to do, shaking with fear, not daring to explain that he had not been drowning, that he had struggled in jest—and farther out people were diving, groping through the water, then looking at each other with bulging eyes, and diving anew, and returning empty-handed, while others shouted to them from the shore, advising them to search a little to the left; and a fellow with a Red Cross armband was running along the beach, and three men in sweaters were pushing into the water a boat grinding against the shingle; and a bewildered David was being led away by a fat woman in a pince-nez, the wife of a veterinarian, who had been expected to arrive on Friday but had had to postpone his vacation, and the Baltic Sea sparkled from end to end, and, in the thinned-out forest, across a green country road, there lay, still breathing, freshly cut aspens; and a youth, smeared with soot, gradually turned white as he washed under the kitchen tap, and black parakeets flew above the eternal snows of the New Zealand mountains; and a fisherman, squinting in the sun, was solemnly predicting that not until the ninth day would the waves surrender the corpse.



VLADIMIR NABOKOV BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Everything is in this passage, from the lovely language ("rote of the sea") to the efficient evidence that David is alive and doomed to a life of regret for his prank, to the terrific to-and-fro-ing of a drowning, the Gogolian runaway sub-story about the veterinary (the very device that Nabokov would later comment on with such relish in his book about Gogol), the slow-motion, black-and-white fantasia on New Zealand, which is a superb rendering of the "bliss" of asphyxiation, to the final, unmistakable proof of death in the fisherman's superstitious prediction, illogical but necessary. Nabokov would again and again write such bravura paragraphs, full of synesthesia, half-buried narrative and sketchy portents. Perhaps the most remarkable is the long last paragraph of the first chapter of *Speak, Memory*, in which the writer's father is tossed high by peasants until his flying body turns into a sculpted angel looking down on a funeral bier that suggests the death of Imperial Russia.

When Nabokov gave himself enough room to develop characters about whom he could care, his twin method of fashioning a nifty plot and loading it down with sensuous detail worked well. The novels, especially *Lolita* and *Pale Fire*, are as fine as anything written in this century, and at least one story, "Spring in Fialta," transcends technique to become a memorable tale of lost love. It was written in 1936, when he was composing *The Gift*, his Russian masterpiece, and it is the ultimate emigrant story, since it is the tale of fifteen years' worth of brief encounters between a man and a woman. Most of the stories, however, are plagued by Nabokov's excesses and redeemed by none of his virtues. They are preening, almost automatically nostalgic about a lost Russia of privilege and aristocratic family love, as sepia-tinted as an old photo of posed family outings. Years ago I asked Nina Berberova about Nabokov, and she exclaimed: "I'm so tired of that sacred childhood of his!" It was a complaint she was richly qualified to make, having lived and lost a similar youth. All of Nabokov's imperiousness turns out just to be a magic fire guarding a sleeping child in patent leather shoes and tailored shorts.

Responding to a brilliant essay written by Simon Karlinsky, the most incisive and erudite Russian scholar of our times, Nabokov expressed pleasure at being linked (as Karlinsky had linked him) to Chekhov, in a secondary Russian tradition that preferred aesthetic values to political sermonizing. Nabokov commented:

> Mr. Karlinsky has put his finger on a mysterious sensory cell. He is right, I do love Chekhov dearly. I fail, however, to rationalize my feeling for him: I can easily do so in regard to the greater artist, Tolstoy ... but when I imagine Chekhov with the same detachment all I can make out is a medley of dreadful prosaisms, ready-made epithets, repetitions, doctors, unconvincing vamps, and so forth; yet it is *his* works which I would take on a trip to another planet.

In this uncharacteristic admission of an admiration that he can't quite defend, Nabokov missed the chance to understand that what made Chekhov great was not his strained originality of language nor his armature of dangerous details and tricky plots, but rather the doctor-writer's nearly scientific precision of observation, an unparalleled freedom from moralizing and a weary but genuine compassion for failed humanity. Chekhov once wrote a letter to Gorky complaining that his descriptions of nature were too ingenious, that he should replace them with simple statements such as "It was raining." One

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wonders what Nabokov would have made of such advice. In *Lolita*, Nabokov's drooping eye is fully open and observant. His harsh moral condemnation of Humbert never precludes a full imagining of the depraved child-molester's eloquence, nor the intensity of his desire. In that one book, Nabokov rivaled Chekhov and justified his entire enterprise.

But his stories never attain this perfection, though they are at their best when they read like condensed, speeded-up novels ("Spring in Fialta" is the prime example). More typically, as in a story such as "The Aurelian," the hero is a stay-at-home shopkeeper who longs to travel. He sells a rare collection of butterflies to an amateur and goes on a long trip to exotic places. Except, as we learn in the last line, Pilgram doesn't really travel: "So, in a certain sense, it is quite irrelevant that sometime later, upon wandering into the shop, Eleanor saw the checkered suitcase, and then her husband, sprawling on the floor with his back to the counter, among scattered coins, his livid face knocked out of shape by death." Get it? The trip was imagined in the instant before death. Cool....

EDMUND WHITE is the author most recently of *Skinned Alive* (Knopf) and, with the illustrator Hubert Sorin, *Our Paris: Sketches from Memory* (Knopf).

City Lights

BY CHRISTINE STANSELL

John Sloan: Painter and Rebel by John Loughery

(Henry Holt, 438 pp., $37.50)

John Sloan's fortunes as a painter of modern life have never prospered. In the early 1900s, when a lingering academicism still shaped fashionable and lucrative painting, Sloan worked at rendering the "tawdry, gaudy, bawdy beauties" of New York into line and paint: wet streets bordered by luminous display windows of cheap goods, lovers on a roof heralded by billowing lines of laundry, a crowd massed under a glowing El at dusk.

Some of Sloan's deepest aesthetic energies and curiosities were bound up with working-class women: drying their hair on the roof of an apartment house, giggling in a huddle outside a naughty nickelodeon show, careening down the big slide at Coney Island, a "line of tangled hosiery and lingerie." In the early 1900s, such figures, rendered as icons of female depravity, were properly confined to illustrations for tracts on commercial vice. Neither tawdriness nor gaudiness were considered fit subjects for an American painting engaged in society portraiture, neoclassicism, picturesque genre subjects, classical allegories and a misty scenic neo-Impressionism.

Americans of all sorts were accustomed to art as parlor decoration. At the moment when post-Impressionism was seizing Europe, Americans balked at the far more moderate realist challenge. Even the sympathetic viewers who saw Sloan's work in the landmark 1908 show of the secessionist "Eight" worried that their liberal response might disqualify them as lovers of beauty. "As it's not pretty, can it be art?" gallery visitors reportedly asked each other. By mid-century, however, when prettiness was no longer the issue and gaudiness and rough brushwork had come into their own, abstraction defined the avant-garde and Sloan's interest in figure and anecdote seemed hopelessly old-fashioned.

John Loughery's book, the first full-length biography of Sloan since Van Wyck Brooks's 1955 treatment of his friend, seeks to revivify his standing as a rebel and an original, "the last of a line of truculent, independent, struggling painters" working in a distinct American grain. Sloan's unhappy destiny was to fight against the stultifying suppositions of one art market—the genteel turn-of-the-century critics, galleries and patrons—only to find himself squeezed out by another, the post-Armory Show avant-garde establishment. Over time, especially as he became a popular teacher, Sloan articulated his own professional problems in a more general demurral from the art world. His chronic outsider status was at the core of his self-designation as a dissenter, even though dissent, as the avant-garde construed it, had long since passed him by. Sloan was well aware of the difficulties in wresting "art" away from its venue in high culture, elite taste and the gallery and museum system. He watched the American scene open up after the 1913 Armory Show only to restructure itself through new forms of what he viewed as aesthetic tyranny.

Loughery concurs with Sloan's own understanding of himself as an aesthetic populist who sought to preserve the life-enhancing qualities of art from the evisceration of fashion, money and snobbish exclusivity. He seeks to rescue Sloan from associations with genre painting, middlebrow realism and Hogarthian cartooning. This approach makes for a pleasant, often absorbing book about a generally admirable man. Sloan was a *mensch*, everyone more or less agreed in his lifetime, and his biographer heartily agrees, too. The muting of all criticism of the man, however, slights some vexing questions about Sloan's personality which might, if examined, enrich our understanding of the life. Throughout his biographical narrative, Loughery inserts loving interpretations of the art, exercises in a knowledgeable and precise formalist analysis which has rarely been applied to an artist too often considered merely an illustrator. Yet these contributions, for all their acuity, are too sketchy to add up to a major reinterpretation. And Loughery's extended appreciation does little to illuminate for readers the context of the early modernist American culture—its markets, subjects, fellow spirits, co-conspirators, audiences and enemies—in which Sloan's work might reveal its full power and interest.

Sloan's absorption in the "tawdry, gaudy, bawdy" took shape within an outpouring of lyrical perceptions of the city in the first two decades of this century, associated especially with the lyrical Left of Greenwich Village, where Sloan moved in 1904. In these years the young intelligentsia began to speak of the metropoles—New York especially, but also Chicago—as rich and animating places that nourished new, modern selves otherwise stunted in the provinces. Grim reflections on the ugliness, the squalor and the anomie of the cities were still current, but sophisticated arrivals began to create a counter-understanding of the city's imaginative riches. "To leave New York," the immigrant and Village character John Butler Yeats explained, as he refused his son William's imprecations to return to Dublin, "is to leave a huge fair where at any moment I might meet with some

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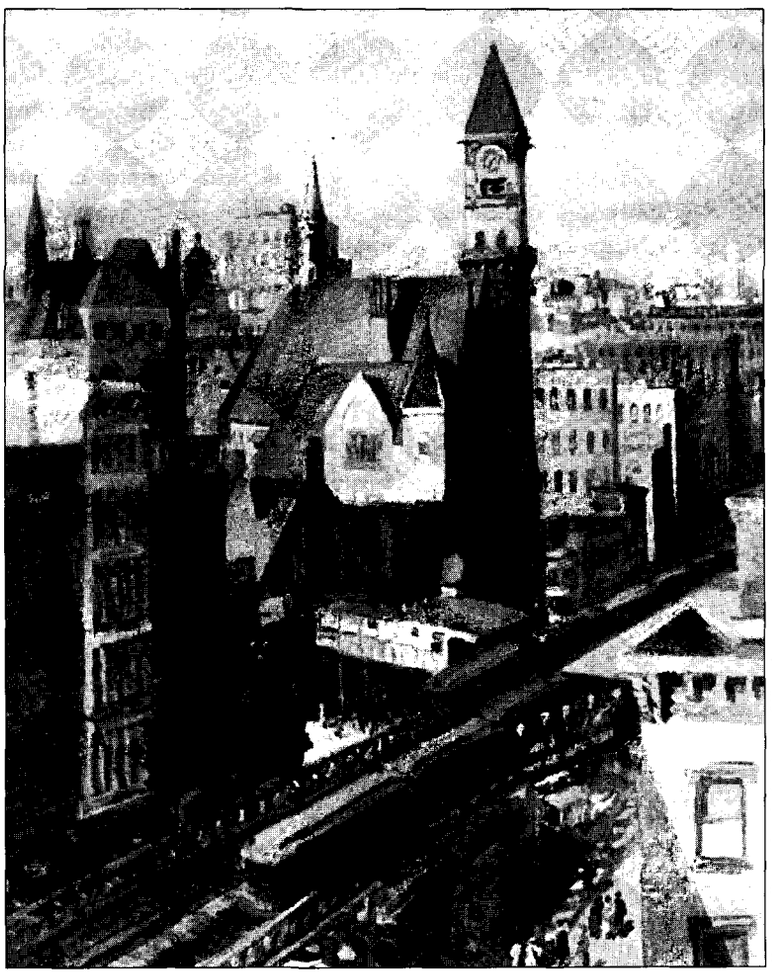
huge piece of luck." Sloan's achievement was to develop in visual form this optics of urban lyricism, with its interest in the voyeurism of the man about town, the visual field of his fleeting glance and the stories and anecdotes—the narrative luck—it could yield up.

Like many of the bohemians of downtown New York, Sloan came from a family of declining fortunes which clung to its book-learning and its love of culture as tokens of a fast-eroding refinement. Born in 1871 in a small town outside Philadelphia, he early learned the raptures of reading binges in Shakespeare, Scott and the nineteenth-century classics as well as the delights of family drawing and painting sessions. Gilded Age culture was materially thick, densely ornamented and visually prolific: with new technologies of reproduction, mass-produced imagery proliferated, it brought tremendous visual energies to reading (books and magazines were routinely illustrated) and to a commerce just learning the seductions of selling with images. Sloan moved between these spheres in his first jobs. As a clerk in a wealthy uncle's Philadelphia bookstore, he perused gorgeously illustrated books and browsed through the collection of the excellent print department. In his first employment as an artist, he painted calendars and etchings, greeting cards and bookmarks for a purveyor of "fancy goods."



Courtesy Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts

JEFFERSON MARKET, SIXTH AVENUE (1915) BY JOHN SLOAN

Newspaper work completed Sloan's education in popular graphics. In 1892, he went to work for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. He proved too fastidious to function as a sketch-artist rushing to the scene of the news along with the reporters to render at top speed the crime, the accident or the catastrophe. But his talents earned him all sorts of odd jobs at the paper—illustrating letters-to-the-editor, embellishing borders, inventing picture puzzles—and introduced him to a company of boisterous colleagues who were also ambitious artists. Like self-styled bohemian journalists everywhere at the time, they made it a habit to roam about the city, jauntily crossing the lines which divided the respectable from the "other half," to socialize in working-class haunts.

These men introduced the well-mannered Sloan to the delectations of urban lowlife. Startlingly, he went one better on his roué friends, deciding in a whirlwind courtship to marry Dolly Wall, a working woman and sometime prostitute whom he met on an expedition to a brothel. Dolly was about as close as a man in Philadelphia could come to a Parisian *grisette*. Although for some time he managed to keep her origins hidden from his straitlaced family, his alliance with an uneducated Irish woman, who early on displayed a fondness for drink, surely advanced his progression from devoted son and breadwinner to bohemian artist in his own and his family's minds.

Sloan learned from the hypermasculine newspaper milieu that commercial art could be a footing into serious work and that an artistic vocation, in this age when "feminization" made culture suspect, could be manly work. Anti-academicism became part of the mix when Robert Henri entered the Philadelphia scene in the late '90s, fulminating against a genteel American art establishment tainted with effeteness by pandering to society women's tastes. Just back from a stint in the Paris schools, Henri was brimming not so much with his own aesthetic innovations (then, as later, Henri was a little behind the times, championing already well-established Impressionists) as with a desire to lead his own secessionist movement. He gathered around him a group of local men, including many of the newspaper sketch-artists, into an informal club which met for life-drawing, beer and amateur theatricals. Henri presided, holding forth on Whitman, Tolstoy, anarchism, the philosophy of art. American art, in his opinion, was in thrall to the most retrograde tendencies from abroad and closed to the energies of the young nation. What was needed was vigor, energy, manliness, life.

Some found Henri long-winded, but Sloan was drawn to his cultural nationalism and to his contempt for the high-finish oil painting that was the fashion in America. He also loved the charismatic, energetic and carefree man himself. Henri reciprocated by encouraging Sloan to think beyond his commercial work. Henri needed a gifted disciple and Sloan required some external authority to justify a move away from the plodding path his family had marked out for him. When Henri moved to New York, Sloan, along with several other talented Philadelphians, soon followed. Henri thus acquired a nucleus of his own group with which to promote his program, right in the belly of the beast. "The big fight is on," he exulted.

The friendship abided, though it did not always suit Sloan professionally or psychologically. Henri would remain a major figure in his life until his death in 1929, an early mentor to whom Sloan remained grateful. But the gratitude must sometimes have chafed, for his own achievements considerably outstripped his mentor's while his reputation lagged behind. One wonders, indeed, how much Sloan's almost obses-

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sive modesty, his difficulties in laying claim to his innovations and contributions, came from an unwillingness to overtake Henri, whose work looked formulaic and outmoded in New York after the Armory Show and whose teaching became so windy that the students at his own school forced him out.

Both Sloans loved New York. Dolly, although handicapped by her worsening alcoholism, jumped into socialist politics and found the city's fast set—the intellectuals, artists and politicos—far more congenial to someone from a working-class background than Philadelphia had been. For Sloan, the city was, as Yeats said, "a huge piece of luck," at least in aesthetic terms. He found the resources for a new style of painting that Philadelphia could never provide. He knew little of European modernism, only the watered-down Impressionism brought back home by genteel painters like Childe Hassam, but he instinctively confronted certain modernist problems. Most directly, he was gripped by the possibilities of revitalizing an exhausted American pictorial tradition by breaking down the distinction between "high" and "low" subjects.

In New York, Sloan learned to move across class lines in order to achieve on canvas something of the spectacular metropolitan social life around him. He would later find himself labeled an "ashcan artist," as if his subject matter was what made his work shocking. In fact, ashcans, and more generally the plebeian life that they symbolized, the mostly immigrant neighborhoods in downtown Manhattan, had been represented in the most respectable New York journals for some time, in illustrations that accompanied articles on city life or fables of "rags to riches." The widespread popularity of the literary "picturesque"—fictions of quaint ethnic or social types, be they Maine fishermen or Lower East Side Jews—had their visual equivalent in such sketches; and recent calls for an art of the New York "picturesque" even placed the genre within the purview of the Beautiful.

So it was not so much Sloan's subject matter, his hairdressers' windows and movie marquees, that called the aesthetic value of his work into question. The widespread dislike of his art was more complex, having to do with its brushwork and its palette—rough, like the Impressionists, but dark, too, with browns and greys, often muddy, and lacking the pastels which made American Impressionism so palatable to its audience. The discomfort of the critics also stemmed from Sloan's refusal to condescend to his material. In his studies of gazers, strollers, leerers and lovers, Sloan bypassed the lingering Victorian moral geography of the "light" and "dark" sides of the cities. Class signifiers—ragged dress and crude physiognomy, formulas for designating working-class "types" in the nineteenth-century tradition—were subdued to the effects of the urban spectacle. Loughery captures this aspect of Sloan's sensibility nicely, his sense that "the city encompassed squalor and exuberance at one and the same time, and that moments of anguish and exhilaration were not antithetical but necessarily linked." The electrified Moorish façade of a movie theater showing *A Romance of the Harem* makes a dazzling stage of the pavement, gathering in figures that, in another visual idiom, would be denoted as waifs and fallen women. But in *Movies* (1913), they, like the artist and the viewer, are supplicants at the shrine of the spectacular: the clamorous and comic architecture, the fabulous lights, the movie itself.

In the hands of Reginald Marsh and Edward Hopper, who were later to work with similar material, commercial pleasures would become the spaces of alienation. With these artists, the effect of estrangement is arresting, in Hopper even formally sensational. Sloan's work, by contrast, seems cozy and domestic, his islands of warm and inviting light the stuff of nostalgia in a city now seen as anything but warm and inviting. The modernist interest in violating the Victorian demarcations between the beautiful and the vulgar, which inevitably entangled art with working-class figures (as artists and subjects) would eventually devolve upon a sensibility of anomie. Sloan's Whitmanian affiliations, tempered by affectionate irony, remained an idiosyncratic vision. He wanted to create a visual corollary to Whitman's urban demos, to draw himself, his audience and his subjects, rich and poor, male and female, into rich affinities of looking and being looked at, ironic loops of glowing glazes which emerged from the shadows and crowds. His visual lyricism of urban sociability was born of a particular pre-World-War I utopian civic sensibility; it could not withstand the imperatives of social realism, a powerful strain in figurative painting in Sloan's left-wing circles after the war. Nor could it adapt itself to the headier challenges of modernism.

Loughery does not analyze these complications in any sustained way. He confines himself to building up a detailed account of the rivalries in the New York art scene in the early mod-

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ernist period. He breaks down the dominant mythology which pits a democratic Henri and his heroic group (Sloan being the most famous) against the prissy, classbound National Academy of Design, the country's chief brokerage firm of taste and legitimation. He shows that in fact all of the Henri group, including Henri himself, had experienced considerable critical success in the early 1900s before the group show that produced the designation of the underdog "Eight."

That show was a secession from the giant Academy exhibition the previous year, where the jury had angered Henri, who was a member, with its shabby treatment of his own work and that of his friends. But since all of them had previously experienced slights from the Academy, the provocations of that particular jury do not adequately explain the desire to secede. The fuss may have had more to do with Henri's sense that the moment—and the audience—was ripe for such a move. Secessions in the Paris art world were familiar enough events to Americans to make this one dramatic and newsworthy. And since many of the earlier Parisian rebels were by 1908 accorded the status of masters, rebellion could be a strategy of legitimation and a marketing device.

The Eight show was a sensation. The crowds were big, the press coverage was vast and, for those in mind of the contemptuous journalistic reception of previous Parisian secessions, suitably bombastic and reactionary. "Is fine art to exhibit our sores?" snorted one offended critic. The buyers, however, did not follow the crowds. After closing in New York, the show went on tour across the country and received a warm reception, but it garnered little cash. Loughery notes shrewdly that the Eight show marked a turning point in the art market away from the autocratic exhibition and museum system towards "larger, younger audiences, the benefits of more attentive newspaper coverage, and the first stirring of art as a 'chic' rather than an institutional concern." It would be some time, however, before this 'chic' percolated through the class who purchased American art. With a few exceptions, wealthy people in the early 1900s still spent their money in Europe on Old Masters real and ersatz, or, at home on American knockoffs of misty Barbizon landscapes, a style long outmoded in Europe.

Sloan never managed to lick this commercial problem. Others were at work on it: Alfred Stieglitz at his Gallery 291 was shrewdly mixing European post-Impressionist work with that of his American artists to create an avant-garde sensibility which assured American buyers that cultural nationalism need not be a duty, but could be a cosmopolitan enterprise *à la mode* and thus a good investment. But the Henri circle and the Stieglitz circles never mixed: one prophet of revolution must have been enough for any of their respective disciples. Sloan went his own way as the Henri "big fight" petered out and then, with the explosion of the Armory Show of 1913 (a "big fight" that made the Eight's battles look puny) fell apart.

He continued to work in oils and lithographs, incorporating some of the fauvist color of the Armory Show into his studies of city lights and crowds. Institutionally, he sought places to work outside the gallery system. He threw himself into editing the art for *The Masses*, the radical newspaper published from lower Manhattan in the 'teens, distinguished by its superb modernist graphics and layout. The old newspaperman and reader of illustrated books was still enthralled by the democratic possibilities of sketches reproduced in the proximity of print and did some beautiful ones for *The Masses*. But as Sloan laid out the paper in the early years, it was a modernist collage, a pastiche of essays, poems and stories juxtaposed with freestanding images. And as the writers began to pressure the artists to bring their work into line with the textual content by adding didactic and preachy captions, Sloan balked.

The requirements of an incipient socialist realism precipitated a split and Sloan, along with other artists, left in a huff in 1916. The Independents Show of 1917 in New York, another challenge to what remained of the juried exhibition system, sparked Sloan's enthusiasm with its principle of absolute openness to any artist who could pay the small initiation fee and dues. But this was to be the last time that his radical democratic impulses allied him with the avant-garde. (Duchamp blew the show apart with his famous urinal by "R. Mutt.") In the 1920s, Sloan would mostly go his own way, looking to the forums of local art shows in the Village and in Taos, where he and Dolly wintered, as an alternative to the Big Money.

In the tightening art world, where serious painters were working to create market conditions where buyers could be assured of the quality of their American purchases, this strategy inevitably linked him with amateur and semi-professional painters. What began as a principled position about democratic access to shows ended unhappily, in the 1940s, in his perverse support for the Art Appreciation Movement, a huckster's scheme to sell paintings in the bargain basements of department stores. Sloan's willingness to attach his name to the enterprise and to sell a few of his paintings through it dismayed his friends and resulted in a devaluation of already-low prices for his work. The admirable Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney and her friend Juliana Force, who became the first director of the Whitney Museum, were loyal champions during these years, but although both helped

Oggi

The world still lies all before us; but in truth we can know
Nothing of that, but only of what was there before us, before
This instant of immediate presence which immediately absents itself.
Any looking glass we'd hold up to the future would have to be,
From our side of things, opaque; and in any case, its tale would
Have to unfold in the past tense, so that, for example,
In the half-familiar great land of Magnana, Count Noctu
And Lady Daly were encroaching on each other's preserves.
While at the sight of la Baronne du Récit du Miroir,
Lord Drol of Emord-Nilap lay back on his sopha and giggled:
"*Elle m'aime? Rien qu'elle-même*", which was funny enough
To cause the Marquise of Parcheesi (the royal game of India)
To wet her pants, but no one else's; meanwhile her sister hummed
"All Our Tomorrows are but yesterdays", the celebrated aria
From *I Domanieri*. They were all, in their way, diddling while
Their silly city burned, while their asymptotic land
Fell to the ever-growing ranks of the unvanquishable von Gestern,
Who is always there, so terribly there right behind us,
But even more terribly, as if ahead of us, lying in wait.

JOHN HOLLANDER

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out in pinches by buying paintings, neither could ever successfully parley Sloan's solid reputation into sustained sales.

Loughery treats Sloan's last years as happy ones. Dolly Sloan, an increasing burden to the artist as her alcoholism worsened, died in 1943 and Sloan married Helen Farr, a former student several decades younger who had been waiting in the wings for some time. A Whitney retrospective, only the second one-person show the museum had devoted to a living artist, brought accolades and a sense that a more thoroughgoing reception of Sloan's work was in the offing. Yet Sloan had a bitter sense that his best work was long past. In lectures at the Art Students' League he shot off "fireworks," as Helen Sloan termed them with gentle wifely euphemism: invectives against the museums and the critics, the roster of his old adversaries, to which he added, with an old man's bile, the successful modernist movements in painting. His judgment was not prescient: surrealism he believed to be a fad, Dada a bad joke, Abstract Expressionism anti-human. As an alternative to the modernist "party line," he advocated his own tradition of figurative painting, floated on a vague humanistic doctrine about the reciprocal relations of art and life.

Loughery soft-pedals this less appealing side of Sloan. His is not a biographical method which circles around the subject and mulls over contrary viewpoints along with the agreeable. It is, rather, one of dedicated celebration. In Sloan's later years, when Loughery can no longer ignore his cranky views and bitter relations with the world, he treats them as effects of an old man's justifiable crotchetiness. But there are signs that the bellicosity was there early on. During World War I, a time when pro- and anti-interventionists were riding high in Greenwich Village, Sloan, a rabid pacifist, did not just argue: he raged at and denounced those who disagreed with him. Loughery brackets similar outbursts as discrete responses to particular pressures of the moment, especially to the strains entailed by living with the alcoholic Dolly, but the marriage could also be described as a partnership organized around the polarities of alcoholic dependency. Dolly the drunk, who oscillated between angry despair and obsequious neediness, confirmed in private and public her husband's stable, genial, generous persona.

Indeed, after Dolly died and the polarity collapsed, Sloan, who was a drinker in his own right, began the "fireworks"—his own transports of rage and disappointment—in earnest, only to be reined in by his second wife, a woman with drive and a professional mission to rescue Sloan and his reputation. Loughery rarely allows us to listen to any aggrieved parties in Sloan's life (such as his first wife, or former friends increasingly appalled by his retrograde views on modern art). As a result, the story of the artist whom Loughery casts as an American original seems curiously tidy, its problems nicely packed away, its loose ends tied up. There are only traces of the circumnavigations of love and enmity, evasion and intelligence, clear-sightedness and self-delusion which go to make up a life.

The importance of Loughery's book lies elsewhere. It pushes us toward a more serious understanding of Sloan's art, one founded on formal grounds rather than on the pallid thematizing—the subject matter treated as illustrative of American social history—to which Sloan's work has fallen victim. Deceptively simple, Sloan's pictures reward renewed scrutiny, and Loughery's book encourages us to take a second look. Sloan was the first American painter to grasp the modern city's ways of hawking and pitching its parts, the manner in which the lights from a display window, spilling over onto the pavement, cast a penumbra of interest around the most mundane passers-by, picking out the scene as ripe with the odd tales in which New York abounds.

Yet Sloan never learned to pitch his work in the modern New York way. Ruminative, darkly modest, caustically anti-elitist, Sloan lacked the temperament to place himself against the downtown skyline that he painted so gorgeously in the splendid *The "City" from Greenwich Village*. Peering down with Sloan from his apartment perch, the eye rests at the bottom of the picture and then travels up the dark curve of the El across the intimate jumble of the village to arrive, at the top, at a glimmering island of Wall Street towers, emanating an uncannily lovely pinkish-golden light. That city of glamour and charisma never quite enveloped Sloan. It remained remote. He was finally a man of the lower, domesticated third of the painting, the foreground of Sixth Avenue, where couples negotiate the puddles.

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TRB *continued from page 4*

ble their threat to counter Quebec's secession with their own secession.)

Of course, there *are* globalizing technological forces of great consequence. First and foremost are the microcomputers and fiber optics that energize financial markets, foster trade and hold multinational corporations together. It is the resulting flow of goods, services and currency that has brought to life such supranational bodies as NAFTA and the World Trade Organization.

But, oddly, these overarching structures may actually promote some forms of fragmentation. Quebec sovereigntists have vowed to join NAFTA and the WTO once liberated from Canada. This is partly politics, a way of quelling fears that a post-secession Quebec will be isolated. Still, it's no vacuous reassurance; a Quebec anchored in NAFTA and the WTO will indeed be more viable than a Quebec flying solo and less of a threat to regional stability; this supranational option makes secession practical. (Quebec supported NAFTA more strongly than the rest of Canada did. The more economic interdependence with the U.S., after all, the less economic dependence on Anglophone Canada. By the same logic, the Irish embrace the European Union as their hedge against British hegemony.)

America's great divide, race, has the virtue of not being a linguistic divide. Still, we are subject to the same technological forces as Canada. Narrowcasting to black Americans is just beginning, but already Black Entertainment Television has helped spread at least one incendiary untruth: intimations three years ago by a (white) psychiatrist that a federal program to study violence was a genocidal plot. The inevitable growth in black (and Hispanic, etc.) media may, of course, prove on balance constructive. Still, it is inauspicious that, with narrower casting yet to come, recent events have shown America, like Canada, to be a place where the crowd count at a political rally varies dramatically according to what wavelength you're on.

One big difference between the U.S. and Canada is that American ethnic minorities, though somewhat segregated, don't dominate the vast swaths of land conducive to secession—not on the scale of Quebec, or even of the Cree region of Quebec. So America's technologically abetted social divisions won't be handled, as Canada's may yet be, by relying on the supranational bodies also fostered by technology; we can't just slice off a chunk of the country and glue it to NAFTA. That's why we need to do a better job of tending to divisions than Canada has done.

ROBERT WRIGHT

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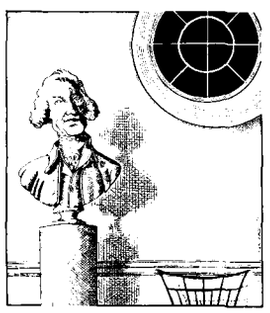
LONDON DIARIST

Do I have to?

"AS A BLACK LESBIAN," BEGAN THE black lesbian from the back of the crowded hall in London. I didn't need to hear the rest of the sentence. I'd heard it dozens of times before. In fact, I'd grown so fond of them over the last six weeks of my book tour that I'd given them a little sobriquet: "azzas." "Azza Latino transsexual,..." "Azza working-class Scottish socialist,..." "Azza white heterosexual woman,..." Azzas believe that all reason gives way at the stoplight of personal experience. They hold that argument is never anything more than the rationalization of personal experience, and that the most marginal of personal experiences is always the most authentic. If you don't buy either of these assertions, conversation tends to be rather limited. If you write a book premised on the quaint assumption of reasoned, civic discourse, you're in for a rough ride. Well, it didn't happen all the time, by any means. But the two places it almost always happened were the most liberal of American campuses and England.

AMERICANS ARE NOT USED TO thinking of England as a hotbed of leftist orthodoxy—and it isn't. It's still a country so free and easy with ethnic, sexual and personal slurs that you almost wish you were a sophomore at Amherst. But it is also a country choked with azzas, of subtler varieties (both right and left), where the level of public debate is markedly lower than in the United States. This is a shame, because the English public, it seems to me, would dearly love more high-minded public discussion; and because England used to be so good at it. The late nineteenth century was in some ways the apogee of intelligent, public discourse: Mill, Bagehot, Newman, Arnold. They wrote not just for Britain but for the world. The genre seemed to peter out, however, in the lucid decency of Orwell. Today, the newspapers are opinionated daily magazines where political commentary (with a handful of brave exceptions) is a form of Higher Gossip. The admirable earnestness of *The New York Times* and even, yes, *The Washington Post* is completely absent. *The Independent* of London, which is struggling to keep afloat, is less gossipy; and a new journal, *Prospect*, is heaving itself against the tide. But, in general, debate among the English chattering classes is largely factional, parochial and unfair. It puts a premium on the cheap shot, and rests, I think, on the depressing assumption that nothing of any consequence is really happening in Britain, that debate there is only relevant to the personal agendas and *bons mots* of a handful of lustrous media figures. While I was visiting, Naomi Wolf, for example, was being traduced left and right in the press for her recent, nuanced piece on pro-choice rhetoric in TNR. None of the articles I read conceded that Wolf is, actually, pro-choice. Most of them sought to personalize her arguments entirely, without taking them at all seriously. One headline in *The Guardian* read: "LOUDMOUTH WITH A B+ BRAIN." The article that followed was less elevated.



THIS IS NOT MERELY a left-wing phenomenon, although personal beastliness, to use an Orwellism, seems increasingly a liberal tic. Conservatives in Britain are just as prone to personalize and factionalize what in America would be viewed as issues to be considered largely on their merits. The debate, for example, over British sovereignty in the European Union is conducted on thoroughly factional lines. One group, represented by the rising right-wing star, Michael Portillo, is really a bunch of people who went to school with each other at Peterhouse, Cambridge, and came under the spell of a particularly far-gone reactionary called Maurice Cowling. The other clique is based in All Souls, Oxford, and claims John Redwood—John Major's summer challenger—as its champion. Each school has an esoteric and distinctive view of historiography, which they will elaborate upon over port for hours. (I kid you not.) Both are opposed to the less-educated Majorites who lean—often persuasively—toward European integration. On the surface, of course, this looks a good deal more sophisticated than, say, the latest issue of *The Public Interest*, and, of course, all political debate, to some extent, arises from personal politics. But in Britain, the shrinking of the country's role in the world, the tininess and chumminess of its cultural elite (most of whom have known each other since freshman year), have cumulatively deoxygenated the public space. The result is that constructive public argument has become rarer and rarer.

THERE MAY BE DEEPER, CULTURAL reasons for this, as well. The decline of religion is probably one. It's simply not part of most English people's upbringing to consider—let alone believe—the possibility of universal truths. Since the sixteenth century, when the state brutally extirpated Catholicism, English faith has been resolutely parochial. (As one Oxford friend of mine put it: "I believe in the Church of England—as a bulwark against religion.") Equally insidious is the dominance in England of analytic philosophy. Virtually no English undergraduate reads, say, the *Nicomachean Ethics* with a view to seeing whether Aristotle might be voicing eternal truths about human nature. So the intellectual muscles that allow serious public debate to take place atrophy young. Compared to the liberal arts emphasis in America, English universities are nests of pragmatism and relativism. When I first came over to America to study at Harvard twelve years ago, I was struck by a simple difference between Oxford and Harvard undergrads. Both were as smart and knew about as much. But the Harvardites were keen to ask about what they didn't know; the Oxonians devoted their entire energy to convincing you that they already knew it. The skills required to do that—rhetorical sleight of hand, on-your-feet wit, exquisite condescension—are, of course, what many Americans admire about English culture. But they're not the same as sophistication. Or knowledge. Believe me.

IN BRITAIN, THE EXCEPTIONS TO this ennui are in Scotland, where the Enlightenment has still not been thoroughly extinguished, and Northern Ireland, where religious faith has nourished intellectual and political life (the province has the highest educational standards in the United Kingdom). But elsewhere, the place positively sighs with cultural exhaustion. If reasoned, neutral liberalism is under threat in America, it has all but expired over the ocean. In filling cultural and academic institutions with British imports, Americans would do well to ask if they're not importing manners that are ultimately corrosive of civil discourse. The English elites chatter marvelously. They stopped believing in anything half a century ago.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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